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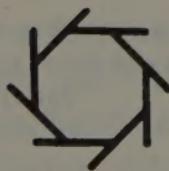
IN
DEFENSE OF
WOMEN



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BY H. L. MENCKEN



OCTAGON BOOKS

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In Defense of Women

§1.

The Maternal Instinct.—A man's women folk, whatever their outward show of respect for his merit and authority, always regard him secretly as an ass, and with something akin to pity. His most gaudy sayings and doings seldom deceive them; they see the actual man within, and know him for a shallow and pathetic fellow. In this fact, perhaps, lies one of the best of proofs of feminine intelligence, or, as the common phrase makes it, feminine intuition. The mark of that so-called intuition is simply a sharp and accurate perception of reality, an habitual immunity to emotional enchantment, a relentless capacity for distinguishing clearly between the appearance and the substance. The appearance, in the normal family circle, is a hero, a magnifico, a demigod. The substance is a poor mountebank.

The proverb that no man is a hero to his valet is obviously of masculine manufacture. It is both insincere and untrue: insincere because it merely masks the egoistic doctrine that he is usually a hero to everyone else, and untrue because a valet, being a fourth-rate man himself, is likely to be the last person in the world to penetrate his master's charlatany. Who ever heard of a valet who didn't envy his master wholeheartedly? who wouldn't willingly change places with his master? who didn't secretly wish that he *was* his master? A man's wife labors under no such illusion. She may envy her husband, true enough, in certain details. She may envy him his masculine liberties, his invulnerable complacency, his talent for petty vices, his soothing romanticism. But she never envies him his puerile ego; she never envies him his shoddy and preposterous soul.

This shrewd perception of masculine

bombast and make-believe, this acute understanding of man as the eternal tragic comedian, is at the bottom of that compassionate irony which passes under the name of the maternal instinct. A woman wishes to mother a man simply because she sees into his helplessness, his need of an amiable environment, his touching self-delusion. That ironical note is not only daily apparent in real life; it sets the whole tone of feminine fiction. The woman novelist, if she be skillful enough to arise out of mere imitation into genuine self-expression, never takes her heroes quite seriously. From the day of Jane Austen to the day of Mary S. Watts she has always got into her character study a touch of waggishness, of superior aloofness, of ill-concealed derision. I can't recall a single masculine figure created by a woman, from Daniel Deronda to Ethan Frome, who is not, at bottom, a booby.

§2.

Woman's Intelligence.—That it should still be necessary, at this late date in the history of the human race, to argue that women are gifted with an acute and valuable form of intelligence is surely an eloquent proof of the defective observation, incurable superstitiousness and general dunderheadedness of man. One finds very few professed feminists approaching the thing as obvious; nearly all of them think it necessary to bring up a vast mass of gratuitous evidence to establish what should be an axiom. Even W. L. George, one of the most sapient of them, wastes a whole book upon the demonstration, and then, with an absurd air of uttering something new, gives it the humorless title of "The Intelligence of Women." As well devote a laborious volume to the lasciviousness of Puritans or the imbecility of Congressmen.

Women, in point of fact, are not only

intelligent: they have almost a monopoly on certain of the subtler and more utile forms of intelligence. The thing itself, indeed, might be reasonably described as a special feminine character; there is in it, in more than one of its manifestations, a femaleness as palpable as the femaleness of cruelty, masochism or rouge. Men are strong. Men are brave in physical combat. Men have sentiment. Men are romantic, and love what they conceive to be virtue and beauty. Men incline to faith, hope and charity. Men know how to sweat and endure. Men are amiable and fond. But in so far as they show the true fundamentals of intelligence—in so far as they reveal a capacity for discovering the kernel of eternal verity in the husk of delusion and hallucination, and a passion for bringing it forth—to that extent, at least, they are feminine, and still nourished by the milk of their mothers. "Human creatures," says George, borrowing

from Weininger, "are never entirely male or entirely female; there are no men, there are no women, but only sexual majorities." Find me an obviously intelligent man, a man free from sentimentality and illusion, a man hard to deceive, a man of the first class, and I'll show you a man with a wide streak of woman in him. Bonaparte had it; Goethe had it; Herbert Spencer had it; Bismarck had it; in Shakespeare, if the tattlers and Freudians are to be believed, it amounted to downright homosexuality. The essential traits and qualities of the male, the hall-marks of the unpolluted masculine, are at the same time the hall-marks of the numskull. The caveman is all muscles and mush. Without a woman to rule him and think for him, he is a truly lamentable spectacle; a baby with whiskers, a rabbit with the frame of an aurochs, a libel on the archangels.

It would be an easy matter, indeed, to

demonstrate that superior talent in man is practically always a function of this feminine flavor—that complete masculinity and stupidity are indistinguishable. Lest I be misunderstood I hasten to add that I do not mean to say that masculinity contributes nothing to the complex of capacities that we call talent; all I mean to say is that this complex is incomplete without the feminine contribution—that it is a product of the reaction of the two elements. In women of genius we see the opposite picture. They are commonly distinctly mannish, and shave as well as shine. Think of George Sand, Catherine the Great, Elizabeth, Rosa Bonheur, Teresa Carreño or George Eliot. The truth is that neither sex, without some fortifying with the complementary characters of the other, is capable of its highest reaches of human endeavor. Man, without a saving touch of woman in him, is too doltish, too naif and romantic, too

easily deluded and lulled to sleep by his imagination to be anything above a cavalryman, a theologian or a stock-broker. And woman, without some trace of that divine innocence which is masculine, is too harshly the realist for those vast projections of the fancy which lie at the heart of what we call genius. Here, as elsewhere in the universe, the best effects are obtained by a mixture of elements. The wholly manly man lacks the wit necessary to give objective form to his soaring and secret dreams, and the wholly womanly woman is apt to be too cynical a creature to dream at all.

§3.

The Masculine Bag of Tricks.—What men, in their fatuous egoism, constantly mistake for a deficiency of intelligence in women is merely an incapacity for mastering that mass of small intellectual tricks, that complex of petty knowledges,

that collection of cerebral rubber-stamps, which constitutes the chief mental equipment of the average male. A man thinks that he is more intelligent than his wife because he can add up a column of figures more accurately, and because he understands the imbecile jargon of baseball and the stock market, and because he is able to distinguish between the ideas of rival politicians, and because he is privy to the minutiae of some sordid and degrading business or profession, say soap-selling or the law. But these empty talents, of course, are not really signs of a profound intelligence; they are, in fact, merely superficial accomplishments, and their acquirement puts little more strain on the mental powers than a chimpanzee suffers in learning how to catch a penny or scratch a match. The whole bag of tricks of the average business man, or even of the average professional man, is inordinately childish. It takes no more actual

sagacity to carry on the everyday hawking and haggling of the world, or to ladle out its normal doses of bad medicine and worse law, than it takes to operate a taxicab or fry a pan of fish. No observant person, indeed, can come into close contact with the general run of business and professional men—I confine myself to those who seem to get on in the world, and exclude the admitted failures—without marvelling at their intellectual lethargy, their incurable ingenuousness, their lack of sense. The late Charles Francis Adams, after a long lifetime in intimate association with some of the chief men of affairs of the nation, reported in his old age that he had never heard a single one of them say anything worth hearing. These were vigorous and masculine men, and in a man's world they were successful men, but intellectually they were all blank cartridges.

There is, indeed, fair ground for argu-

ing that, if men of that kidney were genuinely intelligent, they would never succeed at their gross and drivelling concerns—that their very capacity to master and retain such balderdash as constitutes their stock in trade is proof of their inferior mentality. I do not offer the theory as my own. It is, in fact, of dignified antiquity, and is borne out by the familiar incompetency of first-rate men for what are called practical concerns. One could not think of Aristotle or Beethoven multiplying 3,472,701 by 99,999 without making a mistake, nor could one think of him remembering the range of this or that stock for two years, or the number of ten-penny nails in a hundredweight, or the freight rate on carpet sweepers from Akron, O., to Newport News. And by the same token one could not imagine him expert at billiards, or at bridge whist, or at golf, or at any other of the idiotic games at which what are called

successful men commonly divert themselves. In his great study of British genius, Havelock Ellis found that an incapacity for such petty expertness was visible in almost all first-rate men. They are bad at tying neckties. They do not understand baseball. They are puzzled and flabbergasted by double-entry book-keeping. They know nothing of party politics. In brief, they are inert and impotent in the very field that sees the average man's highest performances, and are easily surpassed in all such banal exploits by men who, in actual intelligence, are about as far below them as the *Simidae*.

This lack of skill at manual and mental tricks of a trivial character—which must inevitably appear to a barber or a dentist as stupidity, and to a successful hay and feed dealer as downright imbecility—is a character that men of the first class share with women of the first, second and even third classes. There is at the bot-

tom of it, in truth, something unmistakably feminine; its appearance in a man is almost invariably accompanied by the other touch of femaleness that I have described. Nothing, indeed, could be plainer than the fact that women, as a class, are sadly deficient in the small expertness of men as a class. One seldom, if ever, hears of them succeeding in the occupations which bring out such expertness most lavishly—for example, tuning pianos, repairing clocks, practising law (*i. e.*, matching petty tricks with some other lawyer), painting portraits, keeping books, or managing factories—despite the circumstance that the great majority of such occupations are well within their physical powers, and that few of them offer any very formidable social barriers to female entrance. There is no external reason why women shouldn't succeed as operative surgeons; the way is wide open, the rewards are large, and there is a spe-

cial demand for them on grounds of modesty. Nevertheless, not many women graduates in medicine undertake surgery and it is rare for one of them to make a success of it. There is, again, no external reason why women should not prosper in the pulpit or at the bar, or as editors of newspapers, or as managers of the lesser sort of factories, or in the jobbing trade, or as hotel-keepers. The taboos that stand in the way are of very small force; various adventurous women have defied them with impunity; once the door is entered there remains no special handicap within. But, as everyone knows, the number of women actually practising these trades and professions is very meagre, and few of them have attained to any distinction in competition with men.

The cause thereof, as I say, is not external, but internal. It lies in the same disconcerting apprehension of the larger realities, the same impatience with the

paltry and meretricious, the same disqualification for mechanical routine and empty technic which one finds in the higher varieties of men. Even in the pursuits which, by the custom of Christendom, are especially their own, women seldom show any of that elaborately conventionalized, and half automatic proficiency which is the pride and boast of most men. It is a commonplace of observation, indeed, that a housewife who actually knows how to cook, or who can make her own clothes with enough skill to conceal the fact from the most casual glance, or who is competent to instruct her children in the elements of morals, learning and hygiene—it is a platitude that such a woman is very rare indeed, and that when she is encountered she is not usually esteemed for her general intelligence. This is particularly true in the United States, where the position of women is higher than anywhere else, and

the old assumption of their intellectual inferiority has been most successfully challenged. The American dinner-table, in truth, becomes a monument to the defective technic of the American house-wife. The guest who respects his esophagus, invited to feed upon its discordant and ill-prepared victuals, evades the experience as long and as often as he can, and then resigns himself to it as he might resign himself to being shaved by a paralytic. Nowhere else in the world have women more leisure and freedom to improve their minds, and nowhere else do they show a higher level of intelligence, or take part more effectively in affairs of the first importance. But nowhere else is there worse cooking in the home, or a more inept handling of the whole domestic economy, or a larger dependence upon the aid of external substitutes, by men provided, for the skill that is wanting where it theoretically exists. It is surely

no mere coincidence that the land of the emancipated woman is also the land of canned soup, of canned pork and beans, of whole meals in cans, and of everything else ready-made. And nowhere else is there a more striking tendency to throw the whole business of training the minds of children upon professional teachers, and the whole business of instructing them in morals and religion upon so-called Sunday schools, and the whole business of developing and caring for their bodies upon playground experts, sex hygienists and other such professionals, most of them mountebanks.

In brief, women rebel—often unconsciously, sometimes even submitting all the while—against the dull, mechanical tricks of the trade that the present organization of society compels them to practise for a living, and that rebellion testifies to their intelligence. If they enjoyed and took pride in those tricks, and showed it

by diligence and skill, they would be on all fours with such men as are head waiters, ladies' tailors, schoolmasters or carpet-beaters, and proud of it. The inherent tendency of any woman above the most stupid is to evade the whole obligation, and, if she cannot actually evade it, to reduce its demands to the minimum. And when some accident purges her, either temporarily or permanently, of the inclination to marriage (of which much more anon), and she enters into competition with men in the general business of the world, the sort of career that she commonly carves out offers additional evidence of her mental peculiarity. In whatever calls for no more than an invariable technic and a feeble chicanery she usually fails; in whatever calls for independent thought and resourcefulness she usually succeeds. Thus she is almost always a failure as a lawyer, for the law requires only an armament of hollow phrases and

stereotyped formulae, and a mental habit which puts these phantasms above sense, truth and justice; and she is almost always a failure in business, for business, in the main, is so foul a compound of trivialities and rogueries that her sense of intellectual integrity revolts against it. But she is usually a success as a sick-nurse, for that profession requires ingenuity, quick comprehension, courage in the face of novel and disconcerting situations, and above all, a capacity for penetrating and dominating character; and whenever she comes into competition with men in the arts, particularly on those secondary planes where simple nimbleness of mind is unaided by the master strokes of genius, she holds her own invariably. The best and most intellectual—*i. e.*, most original and enterprising—play-actors are not men, but women, and so are the best decorators, and teachers, and (in the suffrage states) politicians and mob-masters, and a fair

share of the best writers, and public functionaries, and executants of music. In the *demi-monde* one will find enough acumen and daring, and enough resilience in the face of special difficulties, to put the equipment of any exclusively male profession to shame. If the work of the average man required half the mental agility and readiness of resource of the work of the average prostitute, the average man would be constantly on the verge of starvation.

§4.

Intuition.—Men, as we have seen, are disposed to question this superior intelligence of women; their egoism demands the denial, and they are seldom reflective enough to dispose of it by logical and evidential analysis. Moreover, as we shall see a bit later on, there is a certain specious appearance of soundness in their position; they have forced upon women

an artificial character which well conceals their real character, and women have found it profitable to encourage the deception. But though every normal man thus cherishes the soothing unction that he is the intellectual superior of all women, and particularly of his wife, he constantly gives the lie to his pretension by consulting and deferring to what he calls her intuition. That is to say, he knows by experience that her judgment in many matters of capital concern is more subtle and searching than his own, and, being disinclined to accredit this greater sagacity to a more competent intelligence, he takes refuge behind the doctrine that it is due to some inpenetrable and intangible talent for guessing correctly, some half mystical supersense, some vague (and, in essence, infra-human) instinct.

The true nature of this alleged instinct, however, is revealed by an examination of

the situations which inspire a man to call it to his aid. These situations do not arise out of the purely technical problems that are his daily concern, but out of the rarer and more fundamental, and hence enormously more difficult problems which beset him only at long and irregular intervals, and so offer a test, not of his mere capacity for being drilled, but of his capacity for genuine ratiocination. No man, I take it, save one consciously inferior and hen-pecked, would consult his wife about hiring a clerk, or about extending credit to some paltry shopman in South Bend, Ind., or about some routine piece of tawdry swindling; but not even the most egoistic man would fail to sound the sentiment of his wife about taking a partner into his business, or about running for public office, or about combating a blackmailer, or about marrying off their daughter. Such things are of massive importance; they lie at the foundation of

well-being; they call for the best thought that the man confronted by them can muster; the perils hidden in a wrong decision overcome even the clamors of vanity. It is in such situations that the superior mental grasp of women is of obvious utility, and has to be admitted. It is here that they rise above the insignificant sentimentalities, superstitions and formulæ of men, and apply to the business their singular talent for separating the appearance from the substance, and so exercise what is called their intuition.

Intuition? With all due respect, bosh! Then it was intuition that led Darwin to work out the hypothesis of natural selection. Then it was intuition that fabricated the gigantically complex score of "Die Walkure." Then it was intuition that convinced Columbus of the existence of land to the west of the Azores. All this intuition of which so much transcendental rubbish is merchanted is no

more and no less than intelligence—intelligence so keen that it can penetrate to the hidden truth through the most formidable wrappings of false semblance and demeanor, and so little corrupted by sentimental prudery that it is equal to the even more difficult task of hauling that truth out into the light, in all its naked hideousness. Women decide the larger questions of life correctly and quickly, not because they are lucky guessers, not because they are divinely inspired, not because they practise a magic impossible to men, but simply and solely because they have sense. They see at a glance what most men could not see with searchlights and telescopes; they are at grips with the essentials of a problem before men have finished debating its mere externals. They are the supreme realists of the race. Apparently illogical, they are the possessors of a rare and subtle super-logic. Apparently whimsical, they hang to the truth

with a tenacity which carries them through every phase of its incessant, jelly-like shifting of form. Apparently unobservant and easily deceived, they see with bright and horrible eyes. . . . In men, too, the same merciless perspicacity sometimes shows itself—men recognized to be more aloof and uninflammable than the general—men of special talent for the logical, sardonic men, cynics. Men, too, sometimes have brains. But that is a rare, rare man, I venture, who is as steadily intelligent, as constantly sound in judgment, as little put off by appearances, as the average woman of forty-eight.

§5.

The Duel of Sex.—I have said that women are not sentimental, *i. e.*, not prone to permit mere emotion and illusion to corrupt their estimation of a situation. The doctrine, perhaps, will raise a protest. The theory that they are is itself

a favorite sentimentality; one sentimentality will be brought up to substantiate another; dog will eat dog. But an appeal to a few obvious facts will be enough to sustain my contention, despite the vast accumulation of romantic rubbish to the contrary.

Turn, for example, to the field in which the two sexes come most constantly into conflict, and in which, as a result, their habits of mind are most clearly contrasted—to the field, to wit, of monogamous marriage. Surely no long argument is needed to demonstrate the superior competence and effectiveness of women here, and therewith their greater self-possession, their saner weighing of considerations, their higher power of resisting emotional suggestion. The very fact that marriages occur at all is a proof, indeed, that they are more cool-headed and more adept in employing their intellectual resources, for it is plainly to a

man's interest to avoid marriage as long as possible, and as plainly to a woman's interest to make a favorable marriage as soon as she can. The efforts of the two sexes are thus directed, in one of the capital concerns of life, to diametrically antagonistic ends. Which side commonly prevails? I leave the verdict to the jury. All normal men fight the thing off; some men are successful for relatively long periods; a few extraordinarily intelligent and courageous men (or perhaps merely lucky ones) escape altogether. But, taking one generation with another, as everyone knows, the average man is duly married and the average woman gets a husband. Thus the great majority of women, in this clear-cut and endless conflict, make manifest their substantial superiority to the great majority of men.

Not many men, worthy of the name, gain anything of net value by marriage, at least as the institution is now met with

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in Christendom. Even assessing its benefits at their most inflated worth, they are plainly overborne by crushing disadvantages. When a man marries it is no more than a sign that the feminine talent for persuasion and intimidation—*i. e.*, the feminine talent for survival in a world of clashing concepts and desires, the feminine competence and intelligence — has forced him into a more or less abhorrent compromise with his own honest inclinations and best interests. Whether that compromise be a sign of his relative stupidity or of his relative cowardice it is all one: the two things, in their symptoms and effects, are almost identical. In the first case he marries because he has been clearly bowled over in a combat of wits; in the second he resigns himself to marriage as the safest form of liaison. In both cases his inherent sentimentality is the chief weapon in the hand of his opponent. It makes him cherish the fiction of

his enterprise, and even of his daring, in the midst of the most crude and obvious operations against him. It makes him accept as real the bold play-acting that women always excel at, and at no time more than when stalking a man. It makes him, above all, see a glamour of romance in a transaction which, even at its best, contains almost as much gross trafficking, at bottom, as the sale of a mule.

A man in full possession of the modest faculties that nature commonly apports to him is at least far enough above idiocy to realize that marriage is a bargain in which he gets the worst of it, even when, in some detail or other, he makes a visible gain. He never, I believe, wants *all* that the thing offers and implies. He wants, at most, no more than certain parts. He may desire, let us say, a housekeeper to protect his goods and entertain his friends—but he may shrink from the thought of sharing his bath-tub with any-

one, and home cooking may be downright poisonous to him. He may yearn for a son to pray at his tomb—and yet suffer acutely at the mere approach of relatives-in-law. He may dream of a beautiful and complaisant mistress, less exigent and mercurial than any a bachelor may hope to discover—and stand aghast at admitting her to his bank-book, his family-tree and his secret ambitions. He may want company and not intimacy, or intimacy and not company. He may want a cook and not a partner in his business, or a partner in his business and not a cook. But in order to get the precise thing or things that he wants, he has to take a lot of other things that he doesn't want—that no sane man, in truth, could imaginably want—and it is to the enterprise of forcing him into this almost Armenian bargain that the woman of his "choice" addresses herself. Once the game is fairly set, she searches out his weaknesses with

the utmost delicacy and accuracy, and plays upon them with all her superior resources. He carries a handicap from the start. His sentimental and unintelligent belief in theories that she knows quite well are not true—*e. g.*, the theory that she shrinks from him, and shies modestly at the banal carnalities of marriage itself—gives her a weapon against him which she drives home with instinctive and compelling art. The moment she discerns this sentimentality bubbling within him—that is, the moment his oafish smirks and eye-rollings signify that he has achieved the intellectual disaster that is called falling in love—he is hers to do with as she will. Save for acts of God, he is forthwith as good as married.

§6.

The Feminine Attitude.—This sentimentality in marriage is seldom, if ever, observed in women. For reasons that we

shall examine later, they have much more to gain by the business than men, and so they are prompted by their cooler sagacity to enter upon it on the most favorable terms possible, and with the minimum admixture of disarming emotion. Men almost invariably get their mates by the process of falling in love; at least among American men, the marriage of convenience is rare; a hundred men marry "beneath" them to every woman who perpetrates the same folly. And what is meant by this so-called falling in love? What is meant by it is a procedure whereby a man accounts for the fact of his marriage, after feminine initiative and generalship have made it inevitable, by enshrouding it in a purple maze of romance —in brief, by setting up the doctrine that an obviously self-possessed and mammalian woman, engaged deliberately in the most important adventure of her life, and with a keen understanding of its utmost

implications, is a naif, tender, moony and almost disembodied creature, enchanted and made perfect by a passion that has stolen upon her unawares, and which she could not acknowledge, even to herself, without blushing to death. By this preposterous doctrine, the defeat and enslavement of the man is made glorious, and even gifted with a touch of flattering naughtiness. The sheer horsepower of his wooing has assailed and overcome her maiden modesty; she trembles in his arms; he has been granted a free franchise to work his wicked will upon her. Thus do the ambulent images of God clank their shackles proudly, and divert the judicious with their boastful shouts.

Women, it is almost needless to point out, are much more cautious about embracing the conventional hocus-pocus of the situation. They never acknowledge that they have fallen in love, as the phrase is, until the man has formally avowed the

delusion, and so cut off his retreat; to do otherwise would be to bring down upon their heads the mocking and contumely of all their sisters. With them, falling in love thus appears in the light of an after-thought, or, perhaps more accurately, in the light of a contagion. The theory, it would seem, is that the love of the man, laboriously avowed, has inspired it instantly, and by some unintelligible magic; that it was non-existent until the heat of his own flames set it off. This theory, it must be acknowledged, has a certain element of fact in it. A woman seldom allows herself to be swayed by emotion while the principal business is yet afoot and its issue still in doubt; to do so would be to expose a degree of imbecility that is confined only to the half-wits of the sex. But once the man is definitely committed, she frequently unbends a bit, if only as a relief from the strain of a fixed purpose, and so, throwing off her customary inhibi-

tions, she indulges in the luxury of a more or less forced and mawkish sentiment. It is, however, almost unheard of for her to permit herself this relaxation before the sentimental intoxication of the man is assured. To do otherwise—that is, to confess, even *post facto*, to an anterior descent—would expose her, as I have said, to the scorn of all other women. Such a confession would be an admission that emotion had got the better of her at a critical intellectual moment, and in the eyes of women, as in the eyes of the small minority of genuinely intelligent men, no treason to the higher cerebral centers could be more disgraceful.

§7.

Beauty.—This disdain of sentimental weakness, even in those higher reaches where it is mellowed by æsthetic sensibility, is well revealed by the fact that women are seldom bemused by mere

beauty in men. Save on the stage, the handsome fellow has no appreciable advantage in amour over his more Gothic brother. In real life, indeed, he is viewed with the utmost suspicion by all women save the most stupid. In him the vanity native to his sex is seen to mount to a degree that is positively intolerable. It not only irritates by its very nature; it also throws about him a sort of unnatural armor, and so makes him resistant to the ordinary approaches. For this reason, the matrimonial enterprises of the more reflective and analytical sort of women are almost always directed to men whose lack of pulchritude makes them easier to bring down, and, what is more important still, easier to hold down. The weight of opinion among women is decidedly against the woman who falls in love with an Apollo. She is regarded, at best, as a flighty creature, and at worst, as one pushing bad taste to the verge of indecency.

Such weaknesses are resigned to women approaching senility, and to the more ignoble variety of women laborers. A shop girl, perhaps, may plausibly fall in love with a moving-picture actor, and a half-idiotic old widow may succumb to a college boy with shoulders like the Parthenon, but no woman of poise and self-respect, even supposing her to be transiently flustered by a lovely buck, would yield to that madness for an instant, or confess it to her dearest friend. Women know how little such purely superficial values are worth. The voice of their order, the first taboo of their free-masonry, is firmly against making a sentimental debauch of the serious business of marriage.

This disdain of the pretty fellow is often accounted for by amateur psychologists on the ground that women are anaesthetic to beauty—that they lack the quick and delicate responsiveness of man.

Nothing could be more absurd. Women, in point of fact, commonly have a far keener æsthetic sense than men. Beauty is more important to them; they give more thought to it; they crave more of it in their immediate surroundings. The average man actually takes a sort of bovine pride in his anaesthesia to the arts; he can think of them only as sources of tawdry and somewhat discreditable amusement; one seldom hears of him showing half the enthusiasm for any beautiful thing that his wife displays in the presence of a fine fabric, an effective color, or a graceful form, say in millinery. The truth is that women are resistant to so-called beauty in men for the simple and sufficient reason that such beauty is chiefly imaginary. A truly beautiful man, indeed, is as rare as a truly beautiful piece of jewelry. What men mistake for beauty in themselves is usually nothing save a certain hollow gaudiness, a revolting

flashiness, the superficial splendor of a prancing animal. The most lovely moving-picture actor, considered in the light of genuine æsthetic values, is no more than a piece of vulgarity; his like is to be found, not in the Uffizi gallery or among the harmonies of Beethoven, but among the plush sofas, roccoco clocks and hand-painted oil-paintings of a department store. All women, save the least intelligent, penetrate this imposture with sharp eyes. They know that the human body, except for a brief time in infancy, is not a beautiful thing, but a hideous thing. Their own bodies give them no delight; it is their constant effort to disguise and conceal them; they never expose them æsthetically, but only as an act of the grossest sexual provocation. If it were advertised that a troupe of men of easy virtue were to appear half-clothed upon a public stage, exposing their chests, thighs, arms and calves, the only women

who would go to the entertainment would be a few delayed adolescents, a psychopathic old maid or two, and a guard of indignant policewomen.

Men show no such sagacious apprehension of the relatively feeble loveliness of the human frame. The most effective lure that a woman can hold out to a man is the lure of what he fatuously conceives to be her beauty. This so-called beauty, of course, is almost always a pure illusion. The female body, even at its best, is very defective in form; it has harsh curves and very clumsily distributed masses; compared to it the average milk-jug, or even the average cuspidor, is a thing of intelligent and gratifying design—in brief, an *objet d'art*. Moreover, it is extremely rare to find a woman whose person reveals even such modest charms of aspect as it is theoretically capable of. The average woman, indeed, is ungraceful, misshapen, badly colored and crudely articu-

lated, even for a woman. If she has a good torso, she is almost sure to be bow-legged. If she has good legs, she is almost sure to have bad teeth. If she has good teeth, she is almost sure to have scrawny hands, or muddy eyes, or hair like oakum, or no chin. A woman who meets fair tests all 'round is so rare that she becomes a sort of marvel, and commonly gains a livelihood by exhibiting herself as such, either on the stage, in the half-world, or as the private jewel of some wealthy connoisseur.

But this lack of genuine beauty in women lays on them no practical disadvantage in the duel of sex, for its effects are more than overborne by the emotional suggestibility, the herculean capacity for illusion, the almost total absence of critical sense of men. Men do not demand genuine beauty, even in the most modest doses; they are quite content with the mere appearance of beauty. That is to

say, they show no talent whatever for differentiating between the artificial and the real. A film of face powder, skillfully applied, is as satisfying to them as an epidermis of damask. The hair of a dead Chinaman, artfully dressed and dyed, gives them as much delight as the authentic tresses of Venus. A false hip intrigues them as effectively as the soundest one of living fascia. A pretty frock fetches them quite as surely and securely as lovely legs, shoulders, hands or eyes. In brief, they estimate women, and hence acquire their wives, by reckoning up purely superficial aspects, which is just as intelligent as estimating an egg by purely superficial aspects. They never go behind the returns; it never occurs to them to analyze the impressions they receive. The result is that many a man, deceived by such paltry sophistications, never really sees his wife—that is, as God is supposed to see her, and as the embalmer will see her

—until they have been married for years. All the tricks may be infantile and obvious, but in the face of so naif a spectator the temptation to continue practising them is irresistible. A trained nurse tells me that even when undergoing the extreme discomforts of parturition the great majority of women continue to modify their complexions with pulverized talcs, and to give thought to the arrangement of their hair. Such transparent devices, to be sure, reduce the psychologist to a sour sort of mirth, and yet it must be plain that they suffice to entrap and make fools of men, even the most discreet. I know of no man, indeed, who is wholly resistant to female beauty, and I know of no man who habitually and automatically distinguishes the genuine from the imitation. He may do it now and then; he may even preen himself upon his unusual discrimination; but given the right women and the right stage setting, and he will be

deceived almost as readily as a yokel fresh from the chautauquas.

That men, in their dealings with women, should allow mere physical aspect to weigh so heavily is but additional proof of their faulty observation and reasoning. The baits they swallow most greedily are not edible and nourishing baits, but simply bright and gaudy ones. They succumb to a pair of well-managed eyes, a graceful twist of the body, a synthetic complexion or a skillful display of ankles without giving the slightest thought to the fact that a whole woman is there, and that within the cranial cavity of the woman lies a brain, and that the idiosyncracies of that brain are of vastly more importance than all imaginable physical stigmata combined. Those idiosyncracies may make for amicable relations in the complex and difficult bondage called marriage; they may, on the contrary, make for joustings of a downright impossible

character. But not many men, lost in the emotional maze preceding, are capable of any very clear examination of the facts. The truth is that they dodge the facts, even when they are favorable, and lay all stress upon the surrounding and concealing superficialities. The average stupid and sentimental man, if he has a noticeably sensible wife, is almost apologetic about it. The ideal of his sex is always a pretty wife, and the vanity and coquetry that so often go with prettiness are erected into charms. In other words, men play the love game so unintelligently that they often esteem a woman in proportion as she seems to disdain and make a mock of her intelligence. Women seldom, if ever, make that blunder. What they commonly value in a man is not beauty, or other social showiness, or the vanity that never deceives them, but that compound of small capacities which makes up masculine efficiency and passes for masculine in-

telligence. This intelligence, at its highest, has a human value substantially equal to that of their own. In a man's world it at least gets its definite rewards; it guarantees security, position, a livelihood; it is a commodity that is merchantable. Women thus accord it a certain respect, and esteem it in their husbands, and so seek it out.

§8.

Woman's Equipment.—So far as I can make out by experiments on laboratory animals and by such discreet vivisections as are possible under our laws, there is no biological necessity for the superior acumen and circumspection of women. That is to say, it does not lie in any anatomical or physiological advantage. The essential feminine machine is no better than the essential masculine machine; both are monuments to the maladroitness of a much over-praised Creator. Women, it would

seem, actually have smaller brains than men, though perhaps not in proportion to weight. Their nervous responses, if anything, are a bit duller than those of men; their muscular co-ordinations are surely no prompter. One finds quite as many obvious botches among them; they have as many bodily blemishes; they are infested by the same microscopic parasites; their senses are as obtuse; their ears stand out as absurdly. Even assuming that their special malaises are wholly offset by the effects of alcoholism in the male, they suffer patently from the same adenoids, gastritis, cholelithiasis, nephritis, lues, tuberculosis, carcinoma, arthritis and so on—in short, from the same disturbances of colloidal equilibrium that produce religion, delusions of grandeur, pyrexia, hallucinations of the supernatural, night sweats, the yearning to uplift, and all other such distempers in men. They have, at bottom, the same weakness-

es and appetites. They react in substantially the same way to all chemical and mechanical agents. A dose of hydrocyanic acid, administered *per ora* to the most sagacious woman imaginable, affects her just as swiftly and just as deleteriously as it affects a tragedian, a janitor or an ambassador to the Court of St. James. And once ten or fifteen cocktails are in her, even the least emotional woman shows the same complex of sentimentalities that a man shows, and is as maudlin and idiotic as he is.

Nay; the superior acumen and self-possession of women is not inherent in any peculiarity of their constitutions, and above all, not in any advantage of a purely physical character. Its springs are rather to be sought in a physical *disadvantage*—that is, in the mechanical inferiority of their frames, their relative lack of tractive capacity, their deficiency as brute engines. That deficiency, as everyone

knows, is partly a direct heritage from those females of the *Pongo pygmaeus* who were their probable forerunners in the world; the same thing is to be observed in the females of almost all other species of mammals. But it is also partly due to the effects of use under civilization, and, above all, to what evolutionists call sexual selection. In other words, women were already measurably weaker than men at the dawn of human history, and that relative weakness has been progressively augmented in the interval by the conditions of human life. For one thing, the process of bringing forth young has become so much more exhausting as refinement has replaced savage sturdiness and callousness, and the care of them in infancy has become so much more onerous as the growth of cultural complexity has made education more intricate, that the two functions now lay vastly heavier burdens upon the strength and attention

of a woman than they lay upon the strength and attention of any other female. And for another thing, the consequent disability and need of physical protection, by feeding and inflaming the already large vanity of man, have caused him to attach a concept of attractiveness to feminine weakness, so that he has come to esteem his woman, not in proportion as she is self-sufficient as a social animal, but in proportion as she is dependent. In this vicious circle of influences women have been caught, and as a result their chief physical character to-day is their fragility. A woman cannot lift as much as a man. She cannot walk as far. She cannot exert as much mechanical energy in any other way. Even her alleged superior endurance, as Havelock Ellis has demonstrated in "Man and Woman," is almost wholly mythical; she cannot, in point of fact, stand nearly so much hardship as a man.

can stand, and so the law, usually an ass, exhibits an unaccustomed accuracy of observation in its assumption that, whenever husband and wife are exposed alike to fatal suffering, say in a shipwreck, the wife dies first.

So far we have been among platitudes. There is less of overt platitude in the doctrine that it is precisely this physical frailty that has given women their peculiar nimbleness and effectiveness on the intellectual side. Nevertheless, it is equally true. What they have done is what every healthy and elastic organism does in like case; they have sought compensation for their impotence in one field by employing their resources in another field to the utmost, and out of that constant and maximum use has come a marked enlargement of those resources. On the one hand the sum of them present in a given woman has been enormously increased by natural selection, so that every woman, so to speak,

inherits a certain extra-masculine mental dexterity as a mere function of her femaleness. And on the other hand every woman, over and above this almost unescapable legacy from her actual grandmothers, also inherits admission to that traditional wisdom which constitutes the esoteric philosophy of women as a whole. The virgin at adolescence is thus in the position of an unusually fortunate apprentice, for she is not only naturally gifted but also apprenticed to extraordinarily competent masters. While a boy at the same period is learning from his elders little more than a few empty technical tricks, a few paltry vices and a few degrading enthusiasms, his sister is under instruction in all those higher exercises of the wits that her special deficiencies make necessary to her security, and in particular in all those exercises which aim at overcoming the physical, and hence social and economic superiority of man by attacks

upon his inferior capacity for clear reasoning, uncorrupted by illusion and sentimentality.

§9.

Honor.—Here, it is obvious, the process of intellectual development takes color from the *Sklavenmoral*, and is, in a sense, a product of it. The Jews, as Nietzsche has demonstrated, got their unusual intelligence by the same process; a contrary process is working in the case of the English and the Americans, and has begun to show itself in the case of the Germans. The sum of feminine wisdom that I have just mentioned—the body of feminine devices and competences that is handed down from generation to generation of women—is, in fact, made up very largely of doctrines and expedients that infallibly appear to the average sentimental man, helpless as he is before them, as cynical and immoral. He commonly puts this

aversion into the theory that women have no sense of honor. The criticism, of course, is characteristically banal. Honor is a concept too tangled to be analyzed here, but it may be sufficient to point out that it is predicated upon a feeling of absolute security, and that, in that capital conflict between man and woman out of which rises most of man's complaint of its absence—to wit, the conflict culminating in marriage, already described—the security of the woman is not something that is in actual being, but something that she is striving with all arms to attain. In such a conflict it must be manifest that honor can have no place. An animal fighting for its very existence uses all possible means of offense and defense, however foul. Even man, for all his boasting about honor, seldom displays it when he has anything of the first value at hazard. He is honorable, perhaps, in gaming, for gaming is a mere vice, but it is quite un-

usual for him to be honorable in business, for business is bread and butter. He is honorable (so long as the stake is trivial) in his sports, but he seldom permits honor to interfere with his perjuries in a lawsuit, or with hitting below the belt in any sort of combat that is in earnest. The history of all his wars is a history of mutual allegations of dishonorable practices, and such allegations are nearly always well grounded. The best imitation of honor that he ever actually achieves in them is a highly self-conscious sentimentality which prompts him to be humane to the opponent who has been wounded, or disarmed, or otherwise made innocuous. Even here his so-called honor is little more than a form of play-acting, both maudlin and dishonest. In the actual clinch he invariably bites.

§10.

A Conspiracy of Silence.—The reason

why all this has to be stated here is simply that women, who could state it much better, have almost unanimously refrained from discussing the matter at all. One finds, indeed, a sort of general conspiracy, infinitely alert and jealous, against the publication of the esoteric wisdom of the sex, and even against the acknowledgment that any such body of erudition exists at all. Men having more vanity and less discretion, are a good deal less cautious. There is, in fact, a whole literature of masculine blabbing, ranging from Machiavelli's appalling confession of political theory to the egoistic confidences of such men as Nietzsche, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Casanova, Max Stirner, Napoleon Bonaparte, Lord Chesterfield and E. W. Howe. But it is very rarely that a Mary MacLane lets down the veils which conceal the acroamatic doctrine of the other sex. It is transmitted from mother to daughter, so to speak,

behind the door. One observes its practical workings, but hears little about its principles. The causes of this secrecy are obvious. Women, in the last analysis, can prevail against men in the great struggle for power and security only by keeping men disarmed, and, in the main, unwarmed. In a pitched battle, with the devil taking the hindmost, their physical and economic inferiority would inevitably bring them to disaster. Thus they have to apply their peculiar talents warily, and with due regard to the danger of arousing the foe. He must be attacked without any formal challenge, and even without any suspicion of challenge. This strategy lies at the heart of what Nietzsche called the slave morality—in brief, a morality based upon a concealment of egoistic purpose, a code of ethics having for its foremost character a bold denial of its actual aim.

§11.

Marriage.—How successful such a concealment may be is well displayed by the general acceptance of the notion that women are reluctant to enter into marriage—that they have to be persuaded to it by eloquence and pertinacity, and even by a sort of intimidation. This notion prospers because, on the one hand, the whole force of feminine dissimulation is behind it, and, on the other hand, because it flatters the naif egoism of men; but, as we have seen, there is actually no soundness in it whatsoever. The truth is that, in a world almost divested of intelligible idealism, and hence dominated by a senseless worship of the practical, marriage offers the best career that the average woman can reasonably aspire to, and, in the case of very many women, the only one that actually offers a livelihood. What is esteemed and valuable, in our materialistic and unintelligent society, is

precisely that petty practical efficiency at which men are expert, and which serves them in place of free intelligence. A woman, save she show a masculine strain that verges upon the pathological, cannot hope to challenge men in general in this department, but it is always open to her to exchange her sexual charm for a lion's share in the earnings of one man, and this is what she almost invariably tries to do. That is to say, she tries to get a husband, for getting a husband means, in a sense, enslaving an expert, and so covering up her own lack of expertness, and escaping its consequences. Thereafter she has at least one stout line of defense against a struggle for existence in which the prospect of survival is chiefly based, not upon the talents that are typically hers, but upon those that she typically lacks. Before the average woman succumbs in this struggle, some man or other must

succumb first. Thus her craft converts her handicap into an advantage.

In this security lies the most important of all the benefits that a woman attains by marriage. It is, in fact, the most important benefit that the mind can imagine, for the whole effort of the human race, under our industrial society, is concentrated upon the attainment of it. But there are other benefits, too. One of them is that increase in dignity which goes with an obvious success; the woman who has got herself a satisfactory husband, or even a highly imperfect husband, is regarded with respect by other women, and has a contemptuous patronage for those who have failed to do likewise. Again, marriage offers her the only safe opportunity, considering the levantine view of women as property which Christianity has preserved in our civilization, to obtain gratification for that powerful complex of instincts which we call the sexual, and,

in particular, for the instinct of maternity. The woman who has not had a child remains incomplete, ill at ease, and more than a little ridiculous. She is in the position of a man who has never stood in battle; she has missed the most colossal experience of her sex. Moreover, a social odium goes with her loss. Other women regarded her as a sort of permanent tyro, and treat her with ill-concealed disdain, and deride the very virtue which lies at the bottom of her experiential penury. There would seem to be, indeed, but small respect among women for virginity *per se*. They are against the woman who has got rid of hers outside marriage, not because they think she has lost anything intrinsically valuable, but because she has made a bad bargain, and one that materially diminishes the sentimental respect for virtue held by men, and hence one against the general advantage and well-being of the sex. In other words, it is a guild resent-

ment that they feel, not a moral resentment. Women, in general, are not actively moral, nor, for that matter, noticeably modest. Every man, indeed, who is in wide practice among them is occasionally astounded and horrified to discover, on some rainy afternoon, an almost complete absence of modesty in some women of the highest respectability.

But of all things that a woman gains by marriage the most valuable is economic security. Such security, of course, is seldom absolute, but usually merely relative: the best provider among husbands may die without enough insurance, or run off with some preposterous light of love, or become an invalid or insane, or step over the intangible and wavering line which separates business success from the penitentiary. Again, a woman may be deceived: there are stray women who are credulous and sentimental, and stray men who are cunning. Yet again, a woman may make

false deductions from evidence accurately before her, ineptly guessing that the clerk she marries today will be the boss of tomorrow, instead of merely the bookkeeper of tomorrow. But on the whole it must be plain that a woman, in marrying, usually obtains for herself a reasonably secure position in that station of life to which she is accustomed. She seeks a husband, not sentimentally, but realistically; she always gives thought to the economic situation; she seldom takes a chance if it is possible to avoid it. It is common for men to marry women who bring nothing to the joint capital of marriage save good looks and an appearance of vivacity; it is almost unheard of for women to neglect more prosaic inquiries. Many a rich man marries his stenographer and is happy thereafter, but when a rare woman enters upon a comparable marriage she is commonly set down as insane, and the disaster

that almost always ensues quickly confirms the diagnosis.

The economic and social advantage that women thus seek in marriage—and the seeking is visible no less in the kitchen wench who aspires to the heart of a police sergeant than in the débutante who looks for a husband with a Rolls-Royce—is, by a curious twist of fate, one of the underlying causes of their precarious economic condition before marriage rescues them. In a civilization which lays its greatest stress upon an uninspired and almost automatic expertness, and offers its highest rewards to the more intricate forms thereof, they suffer the disadvantage of being less capable of it than men. Part of this disadvantage, as we have seen, is congenital; their very intellectual enterprise makes it difficult for them to become the efficient machines that men are. But part of it is also due to the fact that, with marriage always before them, coloring

their every vision of the future, and holding out a steady promise of swift and complete relief, they are under no such implacable pressure as men are to acquire the sordid arts they revolt against. The time is too short and the incentive too feeble. Before the stenographer of 21 can master a tenth of the idiotic "knowledge" in the head of the male bookkeeper of 30, or even convince herself that it is worth mastering, she has married the boss or maybe the bookkeeper himself, and so abandons the business. It is, indeed, not until a woman has definitely put away the hope of marriage, or, at all events, admitted the possibility that she may have to do so soon or late, that she buckles down in earnest to whatever craft she practises, and makes a genuine effort to develop competence. No sane man, seeking a woman for a post requiring laborious training and unremitting diligence, would select a woman still definitely young and

marriageable. To the contrary, he would choose either a woman so unattractive sexually as to be palpably incapable of snaring a man, or one so embittered by some catastrophe of amour as to be pathologically emptied of the normal aspirations of her sex.

§12.

The Process of Courtship.—This bemusement of the typical woman by the notion of marriage has been noted as self-evident by every literate student of the phenomena of sex, from the early Christian fathers down to Nietzsche, Ellis and Shaw. That it is denied by the current sentimentality of Christendom is surely no evidence against it. What we have in this denial, as I have said, is no more than a proof of woman's talent for a high and sardonic form of comedy and of man's infinite vanity. "I wooed and won her," says Sganarelle of his wife. "I made

him run," says the hare of the hound. When the thing is maintained, not as a mere windy sentimentality, but with some notion of carrying it logically, the result is invariably a display of paralogy so absurd that it becomes pathetic. Such balderdash one looks for in the works of gyneophile theorists with no experience of the world, and there is where one finds it. It is almost always wedded to the astounding doctrine that sexual frigidity is normal in the female, and that the approach of the male is made possible, not by its melting into passion, but by a purely intellectual determination, inwardly revolting, to avoid his ire by pandering to his gross appetites. Thus the thing is stated in a book called "The Sexes in Science and History," by Eliza Burt Gamble, an estimable lady anthropologist:

The beautiful coloring of male birds and fishes, and the various appendages acquired by males

throughout the various orders below man, and which, so far as they themselves are concerned, serve no other useful purpose than to aid them in securing the favors of the females, have by the latter been turned to account in the processes of reproduction. The female made the male beautiful *that she might endure his caresses.*

The italics are mine. From this premise the learned doctor proceeds to the classical sentimental argument that the males of all species, including man, are little more than chronic seducers, and that their chief energies are devoted to assaulting and breaking down the native reluctance of the æsthetic and anesthetic females. In her own words: "Regarding males, outside of the instinct for self-preservation, which, by the way, is often overshadowed by their great sexual eagerness, no discriminating characters have been acquired and transmitted, *other than those which have been the result of passion*, namely, pugnacity and perseverance." Again the italics are mine. Well, what have we

here? Merely the old, old delusion of masculine enterprise in amour—the concept of man as a lascivious monster and of woman as his shrinking victim—in brief, the Don Juan idea in fresh bib and tucker. In such pishposh lie the springs of many of the most vexatious delusions of the world, and some of its loudest farce no less. It is thus that fatuous old maids are led to look under their beds for fabulous ravishers, and to cry out that they have been stabbed with hypodermic needles in moving-picture parlors, and to watch furtively for white slavers in railroad stations. It is thus, indeed, that the whole white-slave rumble-bumble has been launched, with its gaudy fictions and preposterous alarms. And it is thus, more importantly, that whole regiments of neurotic wives have been convinced that their children are monuments, not to a co-operation in which their own share was innocent and cordial, but to the solitary

libidinousness of their swinish and unconscionable husbands.

Dr. Gamble, of course, is speaking of the lower fauna in the time of Noah. A literal application of her theory to man today is enough to bring it to a *reductio ad absurdum*. Which sex of *Homo sapiens* actually does the primping and parading that she describes? Which runs to "beautiful coloring," sartorial, hirsute, facial? Which encases itself in vestments which "serve no other useful purpose than to aid in securing the favors" of the other? The insecurity of the gifted homophobe's position is at once apparent. The more convincingly she argues that the primeval mud-hens and she-mackerel had to be anesthetized with spectacular decorations in order to "endure the caresses" of their beaux, the more she supports the thesis that men have to be decoyed and bamboozled into love today. In other words, her argument turns upon and destroys

itself. Carried to its last implication, it holds that women are all *Donna Juanitas*, and that if they put off their millinery and cosmetics, and abandoned the shameless sexual allurements of their scanty dress, men could not "endure their caresses."

To be sure, Dr. Gamble by no means draws this disconcerting conclusion herself. To the contrary, she clings to the conventional theory that the human female of today is no more than the plaything of the concupiscent male, and that she must wait for the feminist millennium to set her free from his abominable pawings. But she can reach this notion only by standing her whole structure of reasoning on its head—in fact, by knocking it over and repudiating it. On the one hand, she argues that splendor of attire is merely a bait to overcome the reluctance of the opposite sex, and on the other hand she argues, at least by fair inference, that it is not. This grotesque switching of

horses, however, need not detain us. The facts are too plain to be disposed of by a lady anthropologist's sophomoric theorizings. Those facts are supported, in the field of animal behavior, by the almost unanimous evidence of zoologists, including that of Dr. Gamble herself. They are supported, in the field of human behavior, by a body of observation and experience so colossal that it would be quite out of the question to dispose of it. Women, as I have shown, have a more delicate æsthetic sense than men; in a world wholly rid of men they would probably still array themselves with vastly more care and thought of beauty than men would ever show in like case. But with the world what it is, it must be obvious that their display of finery,— to say nothing of their display of epidermis— has the conscious purpose of attracting the masculine eye. A normal woman, indeed, never so much as buys a pair of shoes

or has her teeth plugged without considering, in the back of her mind, the effect upon some unsuspecting candidate for her “reluctant” affections.

§13.

The Actual Husband.—So far as I can make out, no woman of the sort worth hearing—that is, no woman of intelligence, humor and charm, and hence of success in the duel of sex—has ever denied this; the denial is confined entirely to the absurd sect of female bachelors of arts and to the generality of vain and unobservant men. The former, having failed to attract by the devices described, take refuge behind the sour-grapes doctrine that they have never tried, and the latter, having fallen victims, sooth their egoism by arrogating the whole agency to themselves, thus giving it a specious appearance of the volitional, and even of the audacious. The average man is an almost

incredible popinjay; he can think of himself only as at the center of situations. All the sordid transactions of his life appear to him, and are depicted in his accounts of them, as feats, successes, proofs of his acumen. He regards it as an almost magical exploit to operate a stock-brokerage shop, or to get elected to Congress, or to swindle his fellow knaves in some degrading factory or shop, or to profess some balderdash or other in a college, or to write so platitudinous a book as this one. And in the same way he views it as a great testimony to his prowess at amour to yield up his liberty, his property and his soul to the first woman who, in despair of finding better game, turns her appraising eye upon him. But if you want to hear a mirthless laugh, just present this masculine theory to a bridesmaid at a wedding, particularly after alcohol and crocodile tears have done their disarming work upon her. That is to say,

just hint to her that the bride harbored no notion of marriage until stormed into acquiescence by the moonstruck and impetuous bridegroom.

I have used the phrase, "in despair of finding better game." What I mean is this: that not one woman in a hundred ever marries her first choice among marriageable men. That first choice is almost invariably one who is beyond her talents, for reasons either fortuitous or intrinsic. Let us take, for example, a woman whose relative naiveté makes the process clearly apparent, to wit, a simple shop-girl. Her absolute first choice, perhaps, is not a living man at all, but a supernatural abstraction in a book, say, one of the heroes of Charles Garvice, Robert W. Chambers or Marie Corelli. After him comes a moving-picture actor. Then another moving-picture actor. Then, perhaps, many more—ten or fifteen head. Then a sebaceous young clergyman. Then the

junior partner in the firm she works for. Then a couple of department managers. Then a floorwalker. Then a life insurance collector. Then a drug clerk. Then a young man with no definite profession or permanent job—one of the innumerable host which flits from post to post, a clerk today and a timekeeper tomorrow, always restive, always trying something new—perhaps a drummer, or neighborhood garage-keeper, or fourth-rate political job-holder in the end. Well, the girl begins with the Chambers colossus: he vanishes into thin air. She proceeds to the moving picture actors: they are almost as far beyond her. And then to the man of God, the junior partner, the floorwalker, the insurance collector, the drug clerk: one and all they are carried off by girls of greater attractions and greater skill—girls who can cast gaudier flies. In the end, suddenly terrorized by the first faint shadows of spinsterhood, she

turns to the ultimate numskull—and marries him out of hand.

This, allowing for class modifications, is almost the normal history of a marriage, or, more accurately, of the genesis of a marriage, under western Christianity. Under other rites the business is taken out of the woman's hands, at least partly, and so she is less enterprising in her assembling of candidates and possibilities. But when the whole thing is left to her own heart—*i. e.*, to her head—it is but natural that she should seek as wide a range of choice as the conditions of her life allow, and in a democratic society those conditions put few if any fetters upon her fancy. The servant girl, or factory operative, or even prostitute of today may be the chorus girl or moving picture vampire of tomorrow and the millionaire's wife of next year. In America, at all events, men have no settled antipathy to such stooping alliances; in fact, it rather flatters

their vanity to play Prince Charming to Cinderella. The result is that every normal young woman, with the practicality of her sex and the inner confidence that goes therewith, raises her amorous eye as high as it will roll. And the second result is that every man of presentable exterior and easy means is surrounded by an aura of discreet provocation: he cannot even have his finger-nails polished, or dictate a letter, or ask for a telephone number without being measured for his wedding coat. On the Continent of Europe, where class barriers are more formidable, the situation differs materially, and to the disadvantage of the girl. If she makes an overture, it is an invitation to disaster; her hope of lawful marriage by such means is almost nil. In consequence, the prudent and decent girl over there avoids such overtures, and they must be made by third parties or by the man himself. This is the explanation of the fact that a

Frenchman, say, is habitually enterprising in amour, and hence bold and often offensive, whereas an American is what is called chivalrous. The American is chivalrous for the simple reason that the initiative is not in his hands. His chivalry is really a sort of coquetry.

§14.

The Unattainable Ideal.—But here I rather depart from the point, which is this: that the average woman is not strategically capable of bringing down the most tempting game within her purview, and must thus content herself with a second, third, or *n*th choice. The only women who get their first choices are those who run in almost miraculous luck and those too stupid to formulate an ideal —two very small classes, it must be obvious. A few women, true enough, are so pertinacious that they prefer defeat to compromise. That is to say, they prefer

to remain unmarried rather than to marry beneath the highest leap of their fancy. But such women may be quickly dismissed as abnormal, and perhaps as downright diseased in mind; the average woman is well aware that marriage is far better for her than celibacy, even when it falls a good deal short of her primary hopes, and she is also well aware that the differences between man and man, once mere money is put aside, are so slight as to be practically almost negligible. This average woman is under none of the common masculine illusions about elective affinities, soul mates, love at first sight, and such phantasms. She is quite ready to fall in love, as the phrase is, with any man who is plainly eligible, and she usually knows a good many more such men than one. Her primary demand in marriage is not for the agonies of romance, -but for comfort and security; she is thus easier satisfied than a man, and oftener happy.

One frequently hears of remarried widowers who continue to moon about their dead first wives, but for a remarried widow to show any such sentimentality would be a nine days' wonder. Once replaced, a dead husband is expunged from the minutes. And so is a dead love.

One of the results of all this is a subtle reinforcement of the contempt with which women normally regard their husbands—a contempt grounded, as I have shown, upon a sense of intellectual superiority. To this primary sense of superiority is now added the disparagement of a concrete comparison, and over all is an ineradicable resentment of the fact that such a comparison has been necessary. In other words, the typical husband is a second-rater, and no one is better aware of it than his wife. He is, taking averages, one who has been loved, as the saying goes, by but one woman, and then only as a second, third or *n*th choice. If any other woman

had ever loved him, as the idiom has it, she would have married him, and so made him ineligible for his present happiness. But the average bachelor is a man who has been loved, so to speak, by many women, and is the lost first choice of at least some of them. He represents the unattainable, and hence the admirable; the husband is the attained and disdained.

Here we have a sufficient explanation of the general superiority of bachelors, so often noted by students of mankind — a superiority so marked that it is difficult, in all history, to find six first-rate philosophers who were married men. The bachelor's very capacity to avoid marriage is no more than a proof of his relative freedom from the ordinary sentimentalism of his sex—in other words, of his greater approximation to the clear-headedness of the enemy sex. He is able to defeat the enterprise of women because

he brings to the business an equipment almost comparable to their own.

§15.

The Effect on the Race.—It is, of course, not well for the world that the highest sort of men are thus selected out, as the biologists say, and that their superiority dies with them, whereas the ignoble tricks and sentimentalities of lesser men are infinitely propagated. Despite a popular delusion that the sons of great men are always dolts, the fact is that intellectual superiority is inheritable quite as easily as bodily strength; and that fact has been established beyond cavil by the laborious inquiries of Galton, Pearson and the other anthropometrists of the English school. If such men as Spinoza, Kant, Schopenhauer, Spencer and Nietzsche had married and begotten sons, those sons, it is probable, would have contributed as much philosophy as the sons

and grandsons of Veit Bach contributed to music, or those of Erasmus Darwin to biology, or those of Henry Adams to politics, or those of Hamilcar Barca to the art of war. Even setting aside the influence of heredity, there is the equally potent influence of example and tuition. It is a gigantic advantage to live on intimate terms with a first-rate man, and have his care. Hamilcar not only gave the Carthaginians a great general in his actual son; he also gave them a great general in his son-in-law, trained in his camp. But the tendency of the first-rate man to remain a bachelor is very strong, and Sidney Lee once showed that, of all the great writers of England since the Renaissance, more than half were either celibates or lived apart from their wives. Even the married ones revealed the tendency plainly. For example, consider Shakespeare. He was forced into marriage while still a minor by the brothers of Ann Hath-

away, who was several years his senior, and had debauched him, and gave out that she was *enceinte* by him. He escaped from her abhorrent embraces as quickly as possible, and thereafter kept as far away from her as he could. His very distaste for marriage, indeed, was the cause of his residence in London, and hence, in all probability, of the labors which made him immortal.

In different parts of the world various expedients have been resorted to to overcome this reluctance to marriage among the better sort of men. Christianity, in general, combats it on the ground that it is offensive to God—though at the same time leaning toward an enforced celibacy among its own agents. The discrepancy is fatal to the position. On the one hand, it is impossible to believe that the same God who permitted His own son to die a bachelor regards celibacy as an actual sin, and on the other hand, it is obvious that

the average fourth-rate cleric would be damaged but little, and probably improved appreciably, by having a wife to think for him, and to force him to virtue and industry, and to aid him otherwise in his sordid profession. Where religious superstitions have died out the institution of the *dot* prevails—an idea borrowed by Christians from the Jews. The *dot* is simply a bribe designed to overcome the disinclination of the male. It involves a frank recognition of the fact that he loses by marriage, and it seeks to make up for that loss by a money payment. Its obvious effect is to give young women a wider and better choice of husbands. A relatively superior man, otherwise quite out of reach, may be brought into camp by the assurance of economic ease, and what is more, he may be kept in order after he has been taken by the consciousness of his gain. Among hard-headed and highly practical peoples, such as the Jews and

the French, the *dot* flourishes, and its effect is to promote intellectual suppleness in the race, for the average child is thus not inevitably the offspring of a woman and a noodle, as with us, but may be the offspring of a woman and a man of reasonable intelligence. But even in France, the very highest class of men tend to evade marriage; they resist money almost as unanimously as their Anglo-Saxon brethren resist sentimentality.

In America the *dot* is almost unknown, partly because money-getting is easier to men than on the Continent and is regarded as less degrading, and partly because American men are more naif than Frenchmen and are thus readily intrigued without actual bribery. But the best of them nevertheless lean to celibacy, and plans for overcoming their habit are frequently proposed and discussed. One such plan involves a heavy tax on bachelors. The defect in it lies in the fact that the

average bachelor, for obvious reasons, is relatively well to do, and would pay the tax rather than marry. Moreover, the payment of it would help to salve his conscience, which is now often made restive, I believe, by a maudlin feeling that he is shirking his duty to the race, and so he would be confirmed and supported in his determination to avoid the altar. Still further, he would escape the social odium which now attaches to his celibacy, for whatever a man pays for is regarded, in America at least, as his right. As things stand, that odium is of definite potency, and undoubtedly has its influence upon a certain number of men in the lower ranks of bachelors. They stand, so to speak, in the twilight zone of bachelorhood, with one leg furtively over the altar rail; it needs only an extra pull to bring them to the sacrifice. But if they could compound for their immunity by a cash indemnity it is highly probable

that they would take on new resolution, and in the end they would convert what remained of their present disrepute into a source of egoistic satisfaction, as is done, indeed, by a great many bachelors even today. These last immoralists are privy to the elements which enter into that disrepute: the ire of women whose devices they have resisted and the jealousy of men who have succumbed.

§16.

Compulsory Marriage.—I myself once proposed an alternative scheme, to wit, the prohibition of sentimental marriages by law, and the substitution of match-making by the common hangman. This plan, as revolutionary as it may seem, would have several plain advantages. For one thing, it would purge the serious business of marriage of the romantic fol-de-rol that now corrupts it, and so make for the peace and happiness of the race. For another

thing, it would work against the process which now selects out, as I have said, those men who are most fit, and so throws the chief burden of paternity upon the inferior, to the damage of posterity. The hangman, if he made his selections arbitrarily, would try to give his office permanence and dignity by choosing men whose marriage would meet with public approbation, *i. e.*, men obviously of sound stock and talents, *i. e.*, the sort of men who now habitually escape. And if he made his selection by the hazard of the die, or by drawing numbers out of a hat, or by any other such method of pure chance, that pure chance would fall indiscriminately upon all orders of men, and the upper orders would thus lose their present comparative immunity. True enough, a good many men would endeavor to influence him privately to their own advantage, and it is probable that he would occasionally succumb, but it must be plain that

the men most likely to prevail in that enterprise would not be philosophers, but politicians, and so there would be some benefit to the race even here. Posterity surely suffers no very heavy loss when a Congressman, a ward boss or even a member of the Cabinet dies childless, but when a Herbert Spencer goes to the grave without leaving sons behind him there is a detriment to all the generations of the future.

I did not offer the plan, of course, as a contribution to practical politics, but merely as a sort of hypothesis, to help clarify the problem. Many other theoretical advantages appear in it, but its execution is made impossible, not only by inherent defects, but also by a general disinclination to abandon the present system, which at least offers certain attractions to concrete men and women, despite its unfavorable effects upon the unborn. Women would oppose the substitution of

chance or arbitrary fiat for the existing struggle for the plain reason that every woman is convinced, and no doubt rightly, that her own judgment is superior to that of either the common hangman or the gods, and that her own enterprise is more favorable to her opportunities. And men would oppose it because it would restrict their liberty. This liberty, of course, is largely imaginary. In its common manifestation, it is no more, at bottom, than the privilege of being bamboozled and made a mock of by the first woman who ventures to essay the business. But none the less it is quite as precious to men as any other of the ghosts that their vanity conjures up for their enchantment. They cherish the notion that unconditioned volition enters into the matter, and that under volition there is not only a high degree of sagacity but also a touch of the daring and the devilish. A man is often almost as much pleased and flattered by

his own marriage as he would be by the achievement of what is currently called a seduction. In the one case, as in the other, his emotion is one of triumph. The substitution of pure chance would take away that soothing unction.

The present system, to be sure, also involves chance. Every man realizes it, and even the most bombastic bachelor has moments in which he humbly whispers: "There, but for the grace of God, go I." But that chance has a sugar-coating; it is swathed in egoistic illusion; it shows less stark and intolerable chanciness, so to speak, than the bald hazard of the die. Thus men prefer it, and shrink from the other. In the same way, I have no doubt, the majority of foxes would object to choosing lots to determine the victim of a projected fox-hunt. They prefer to take their chances with the dogs.

§17.

Extra-Legal Devices.—It is, of course, an exaggeration to say that all first-class men escape marriage, and even more of an exaggeration to say that their high qualities go wholly untransmitted to posterity. On the one hand it must be obvious that an appreciable number of them, perhaps by reason of their very detachment and preoccupation, are intrigued into the holy estate, and that not a few of them enter it deliberately, convinced that it is the safest form of liaison possible under Christianity. And on the other hand one must not forget the well-known biological fact that it is quite feasible to achieve offspring without the imprimatur of Church and State. The thing, indeed, is so commonplace that I need not risk a scandal by uncovering it in detail. What I allude to, I need not add, is not that form of irregularity which curses innocent children with the stigma of illegit-

imacy, but that more refined and thoughtful form which safeguards their social dignity while protecting them against inheritance from their legal fathers.

The extent of this correction of a salient evil of monogamy is very considerable; its operations explain the private disrepute of perhaps a majority of first-rate men; its advantages have been set forth in George Moore's "*Euphorion in Texas*," though in a clumsy and rather unconvincing way. What is behind it is the profound race-sense of women—the instinct which makes them regard the unborn in their every act—perhaps, too, the fact that the interests of the unborn are here identical, as in other situations, with their own egoistic aspirations. As a popular philosopher has shrewdly observed, the objections to polygamy do not come from women, for the average woman is sensible enough to prefer half or a quarter or even a tenth of a first-rate man to

the whole devotion of a third-rate man. Considerations of much the same sort also justify polyandry—if not morally, then at least biologically. The average woman, as I have shown, must inevitably view her actual husband with a certain disdain; he is anything but her ideal. In consequence, she cannot help feeling that her children are cruelly handicapped by the fact that he is their father, nor can she help feeling guilty about it; for she knows that he is their father only by reason of her own initiative in the proceedings anterior to her marriage. If, now, an opportunity presents itself to remove that handicap from at least some of them, and at the same time to realize her ideal and satisfy her vanity—if such a chance offers it is no wonder that she occasionally embraces it.

Here we have an explanation of many lamentable and otherwise inexplicable violations of the domestic hearth. The

woman in the case is commonly dismissed as vicious, but that is no more than a new example of the common human tendency to attach the concept of viciousness to whatever is natural, and intelligent, and above the bovine comprehension of the herd.

§18.

Late Marriage.—The marriage of a first-rate man, when it takes place at all, commonly takes place relatively late. He may succumb in the end, but he is almost always able to postpone the disaster a good deal longer than the average poor clod-pate, or normal man. If he actually marries early, it is nearly always proof that some intolerable external pressure has been applied to him, as in Shakespeare's case, or that his mental sensitiveness approaches downright insanity, as in Shelley's. This fact, curiously enough, has escaped the observation of an otherwise

extremely astute observer, namely Havelock Ellis. In his study of British genius, he notes the fact that most men of unusual capacities are the sons of relatively old fathers, but instead of exhibiting the true cause thereof, he ascribes it to a mysterious quality whereby a man already in decline is capable of begetting better offspring than one in full vigor. This is a palpable absurdity, not only because it goes counter to facts long established by animal breeders, but also because it tacitly assumes that talent, and hence the capacity for transmitting it, is an acquired character, and that this character may be transmitted. Nothing could be more unsound. Talent is not an acquired character, but a congenital character, and the man who is born with it has it in early life quite as well as in later life, though its manifestation may have to wait. James Mill was yet a young man when his son, John Stuart Mill, was born, and not one

of his principal books had been written. But though the "Elements of Political Economy" and the "Analysis of the Human Mind" were thus but vaguely formulated in his mind, if they were actually so much as formulated at all, and it was 15 years before he wrote them, he was still quite able to transmit the capacity to write them to his son, and that capacity showed itself, years afterward, in the latter's "Principles of Political Economy" and "Essay on Liberty."

But Ellis' faulty inference is still based upon a sound observation, to wit, that the sort of man capable of transmitting high talents to a son is ordinarily a man who does not have a son at all, at least in wedlock, until he has advanced into middle life. The reasons which impel him to yield even then are somewhat obscure, but two or three of them, perhaps, may be vaguely discerned. One lies in the fact that every man, whether of the first class

or of any other class, tends to decline in mental agility as he grows older, though in the actual range and profundity of his intelligence he may keep on improving until he collapses into senility. Obviously, it is mere agility of mind, and not profundity, that is of most value and effect in so tricky and deceptive a combat as the duel of sex. The aging man, with his agility gradually withering, is thus confronted by women in whom it still luxuriates as a function of their relative youth. Not only do women of his own age aspire to ensnare him, but also women of all ages back to adolescence. Hence his average or typical opponent tends to be progressively younger and younger than he is, and in the end the mere advantage of her youth may be sufficient to tip over his tottering defenses. This, I take it, is why oldish men are so often intrigued by girls still in their teens. It is not that age calls maudlinly to youth, as the poets

would have it; it is that age is no match for youth, especially when age is male and youth is female. The case of the late Henrik Ibsen was typical. At 40 Ibsen was a sedate family man, and it is doubtful that he ever so much as glanced at a woman; all his thoughts were upon the composition of "The League of Youth," his first social drama. At 50 he was almost as preoccupied; "A Doll's House" was then hatching. But at 60, with his best work all done and his decline begun, he succumbed preposterously to a flirtatious damsel of 18, and thereafter, until actual insanity released him, he mooned like a stock-company actor in "East Lynne." Had it not been, indeed, for the fact that he was already married, and to a very sensible wife, he would have run off with this cutie, and so made himself publicly ridiculous.

§19.

An Increase in Benefits.—Another reason for the relatively late marriages of first-rate men is found, perhaps, in the fact that, as a man grows older, the disabilities he suffers by marriage tend to diminish and the advantages to increase. At thirty a man is terrified by monogamy and has little taste for the so-called comforts of a home; at sixty he is beyond amorous adventure and is in need of creature ease and security. What he is oftenest conscious of, in these later years, is his physical decay; he sees himself as in imminent danger of falling into neglect and helplessness. He is thus confronted by a choice between getting a wife or hiring a nurse, and he commonly chooses the wife as the less expensive and exacting. The nurse, indeed, would probably try to marry him anyhow; if he employs her in place of a wife he commonly ends by finding himself married and minus a

nurse, to his confusion and discomfiture, and to the far greater discomfiture of his heirs and assigns. This process is so obvious and so commonplace that I apologize formally for rehearsing it. What it indicates is simply this: that a man's instinctive aversion to marriage is grounded upon a sense of social and economic self-sufficiency, and that it descends into a mere theory when this self-sufficiency disappears. After all, nature is on the side of mating, and hence on the side of marriage, and vanity is a powerful ally of nature. If men, at the normal mating age, had half as much to gain by marriage as women gain, then all men would be as ardently in favor of it as women are.

§20.

Disparate Unions.—This brings us to a fact frequently noted by students of the subject: that first-rate men, when they marry at all, tend to marry noticeably in-

ferior wives. The causes of the phenomenon, so often discussed and so seldom illuminated, should be plain by now. The first-rate man, by postponing marriage as long as possible, often approaches it in the end with his faculties crippled by senility, and is thus open to the advances of women whose attractions are wholly meretricious, *e. g.*, empty flappers, scheming widows, and trained nurses with a highly developed professional technic of sympathy. If he marries at all, indeed, he must commonly marry badly, for women of genuine merit are no longer interested in him; what was once a lode-star is now no more than a smoking smudge. It is this circumstance that accounts for the low calibre of a good many first-rate men's sons, and gives a certain support to the common notion that they are always third-raters. Those sons inherit from their mothers as well as from their fathers, and the bad strain is often

sufficient to obscure and nullify the good strain. Mediocrity, as every Mendelian knows, is a dominant character, and extraordinary ability is a recessive character. In a marriage between an able man and a commonplace woman, the chances that any given child will resemble the mother are, roughly speaking, three to one.

The fact suggests the thought that nature is secretly against the superman, and seeks to prevent his birth. We have, indeed, no ground for assuming that the continued progress visualized by man is in actual accord with the great flow of the elemental forces. Devolution is quite as natural as evolution, and may be just as pleasing, or even a good deal more pleasing, to God. If the average man is made in God's image, then a man such as Beethoven or Aristotle is plainly superior to God, and so God may be jealous of him, and eager to see his superiority perish with his bodily frame. All animal

breeders know how difficult it is to maintain a fine strain. The universe seems to be in a conspiracy to encourage the endless reproduction of *mouzhiks*, Methodists and Knights of Pythias, but a subtle and mysterious opposition stands eternally against the reproduction of philosophers.

Per corollary, it is notorious that women of merit frequently marry second-rate men, and bear them children, thus aiding in the war upon progress. One is often astonished to discover that the wife of some sordid and prosaic manufacturer or banker or professional man is a woman of quick intelligence and genuine charm, with intellectual interests so far above his comprehension that he is scarcely so much as aware of them. Again, there are the leading feminists, women artists and other such captains of the sex: their husbands are almost always inferior men, and sometimes downright

fools. But not paupers! Not incompetents in a man's world! Not bad husbands! What we have here, of course, is no more than a fresh proof of the sagacity of women. The first-rate woman is a realist. She sees clearly that, in a world dominated by second-rate men, the special capacities of the second-rate man are esteemed above all other capacities and given the highest rewards, and she endeavors to get her share of those rewards by marrying a second-rate man at the top of his class. The first-rate man is an admirable creature; his qualities are appreciated by every intelligent woman; as I have just said, it may be reasonably argued that he is actually superior to God. But his attractions, after a certain point, do not run in proportion to his deserts; beyond that he ceases to be a good husband. Hence the pursuit of him is chiefly maintained, not by women who are his

peers, but by women who are his inferiors.

Here we unearth another factor: the fascination of what is strange, the charm of the unlike, *héliogabalisme*. As Shakespeare has put it, there must be some mystery in love—and there can be no mystery between intellectual equals. I daresay that many a woman marries an inferior man, not primarily because he is a good provider (though it is impossible to imagine her overlooking this), but because his very inferiority interests her, and makes her want to remedy it and mother him. Egoism is in the impulse: it is pleasant to have a feeling of superiority, and to be assured that it can be maintained. If, now, that feeling be mingled with sexual curiosity and economic self-interest, it obviously supplies sufficient motivation to account for so natural and banal a thing as a marriage. Perhaps the greatest of all these factors is the mere

disparity, the naked strangeness. A woman could not love a man, as the phrase is, who wore skirts and pencilled his eye-brows, and by the same token she would probably find it difficult to love a man who matched perfectly her own sharpness of mind. What she most esteems in marriage, on the psychic plane, is the chance it offers for the exercise of that caressing irony which I have already described. She likes to observe that her man is a fool—dear, perhaps, but none the less damned. Her so-called love for him, even at its highest, is always somewhat pitying and patronizing.

§21.

The Charm of Mystery.—It is an unfortunate fact that modern marriage, by its very conditions, tends to break down this strangeness. It forces the two contracting parties into an intimacy that is too persistent and unmitigated; they are

in contact at too many points, and too steadily. By and by all the mystery of the relation is gone, and they stand in the unsexed position of brother and sister. Thus that "maximum of temptation" of which Shaw speaks has within itself the seeds of its own decay. A husband begins by kissing a pretty girl, his wife; it is pleasant to have her so handy and so willing. He ends by making machiavellian efforts to avoid kissing the everyday sharer of his meals, books, bath towels, pocketbook, relatives, ambitions, secrets, malaises and business: a proceeding about as romantic as having his shoes polished. The thing is too horridly dismal for words. Not all the native sentimentalism of man can overcome the distaste and boredom that get into it. Not all the histrionic capacity of woman can attach any appearance of gusto and spontaneity to it.

An estimable lady psychologist, Mrs. Marion Cox, in a somewhat florid book

entitled "Ventures into Worlds," has a sagacious essay upon this subject. She calls the essay "Our Incestuous Marriage," and argues accurately that, once the adventurous descends to the habitual, it takes on an offensive and degrading character. The intimate approach, to give genuine joy, must be a concession, a feat of persuasion, a victory; once it loses that character it loses everything. Such a destructive conversion is effected by the average monogamous marriage. It breaks down all mystery and reserve, for how can mystery and reserve survive the use of the same hot water bag and a joint concern about butter and egg bills? What remains, at least on the husband's side, is esteem—the feeling one has for an amiable aunt. And confidence—the emotion evoked by a lawyer, a dentist or a fortune-teller. And habit—the thing which makes it possible to eat the same break-

fast every day, and to wind up one's watch regularly, and to earn a living.

Mrs. Cox, if I remember her dissertation correctly, proposes to prevent this stodgy dephlogistication of marriage by interrupting its course—that is, by separating the parties now and then, so that neither will become too familiar and commonplace to the other. By this means, she argues, curiosity will be periodically revived, and there will be a chance for personality to expand *a cappella*, and so each reunion will have in it something of the surprise, the adventure and the virtuous satanry of the honeymoon. The husband will not come back to precisely the same wife that he parted from, and the wife will not welcome precisely the same husband. Even supposing them to have gone on substantially as if together, they will have gone on out of sight and hearing of each other. Thus each will find the other, to some extent at least, a

stranger, and hence a bit challenging, and hence a bit charming. The scheme has merit. More, it has been tried often, and with success. It is, indeed, a familiar observation that the happiest couples are those who are occasionally separated, and the fact has been embalmed in the trite maxim that absence makes the heart grow fonder. Perhaps not actually fonder, but at any rate more tolerant, more curious, more eager. Two difficulties, however, stand in the way of the widespread adoption of the remedy. One lies in its costliness: the average couple cannot afford a double establishment, even temporarily. The other lies in the fact that it inevitably arouses the envy and ill-nature of those who cannot adopt it, and so causes a gabbling of scandal. The world invariably suspects the worst. Let man and wife separate to save their happiness from suffocation in the kitchen, the dining room and the connubial chamber, and it will

immediately conclude that the corpse is already laid out in the parlor.

§22.

Woman as Wife.—This boredom of marriage, however, is not nearly so dangerous a menace to the institution as Mrs. Cox, with evangelistic enthusiasm, permits herself to think it is. It bears most harshly upon the wife, who is almost always the more intelligent of the pair; in the case of the husband its pains are usually lightened by that sentimentality with which men dilute the disagreeable, particularly in marriage. Moreover, the average male gets his living by such depressing devices that boredom becomes a sort of natural state to him. A man who spends six or eight hours a day acting as paying teller in a bank, or sitting upon the bench of a court, or looking to the inexpressibly trivial details of some process of manufacturing, or writing imbecile

editorials for a newspaper, or managing a street railway, or administering ineffective medicines to stupid and uninteresting patients—a man so engaged during all his hours of labor, which means a normal, typical man, is surely not one to be oppressed unduly by the dull round of domesticity. His wife may bore him as mistress, just as any other mistress inevitably bores a man (though surely not so quickly and so painfully as a lover bores a woman), but she is not apt to bore him in her other capacities. What he commonly complains about in her, in truth, is not that she tires him by her monotony, but that she tires him by her variety—not that she is too static, but that she is too dynamic. He is weary when he gets home, and asks only the dull peace of a hog in a comfortable sty. This peace is broken by the greater restlessness of his wife, the fruit of her greater intellectual resilience and curiosity.

Of far more potency as a cause of con-nubial discord is the general inefficiency of women at the business of what is called keeping house—a business founded upon a complex of trivial technicalities. As I have argued at length, women are con-genitally less fitted for mastering these technicalities than men; the enterprise al-ways costs them more effort, and they are never able to reinforce mere diligent ap-plication with that obtuse enthusiasm which men commonly bring to their tawdry and childish concerns. But in ad-dition to their natural incapacity, there is a reluctance based upon a deficiency in incentive, and that deficiency in incentive is due to the maudlin sentimentality with which men regard marriage. In this sen-timentality lie the germs of most of the evils which beset the institution in Chris-tendom, and particularly in the United States, where sentiment is always carried to inordinate lengths. Having abandoned

the medieval concept of woman as temptress, men have revived the correlative medieval concept of woman as angel, and to bolster up that character they have created for her a vast and growing mass of immunities, culminating of late years in the astounding doctrine that, under the contract of marriage, all the duties lie upon the man and all the privileges appertain to the woman. In part this doctrine has been established by the intellectual enterprise and audacity of women. Bit by bit, playing upon masculine stupidity, sentimentality and lack of strategical sense, they have formulated it, developed it, and entrenched it in custom and law. But in other part it is the plain product of the donkeyish vanity which makes almost every man view the practical incapacity of his wife as, in some vague way, a tribute to his own high mightiness and consideration. Whatever his revolt against her immediate indolence

and inefficiency, his ideal is nearly always a situation in which she will figure as a magnificent drone, a sort of empress without portfolio, entirely discharged from every unpleasant labor and responsibility.

§23.

Marriage and the Law.—This was not always the case. No more than a century ago the husband, by American law, was the head of the family firm, lordly and autonomous. He had authority over the purse-strings, over the children, and even over the wife. He could enforce his mandates by appropriate punishment, including the corporal. His sovereignty and dignity were carefully guarded by legislation, the product of thousands of years of experience and ratiocination. He was safeguarded in his self-respect by the most elaborate and efficient devices, and they had the support of public opinion.

Consider, now, the changes that a few

short years have wrought. Today, by the laws of most American states—laws proposed, in most cases, by maudlin and often notoriously extravagant agitators, and passed by sentimental orgy—all of the old rights of the husband have been converted into obligations. He no longer has any control over his wife's property; she may devote its income to the family or she may squander that income upon idle follies, and he can do nothing. She has equal authority in regulating and disposing of the children, and, in the case of infants, more than he. There is no law compelling her to do her share of the family labor: she may spend her whole time in moving-picture parlors, or gadding about the department-stores, as she will. She cannot be forced to perpetuate the family name if she does not want to. She cannot be attacked with masculine weapons, *e. g.*, fists and firearms, when she makes an assault with feminine

weapons, *e. g.*, snuffling, invective and sabotage. Finally, no lawful penalty can be visited upon her if she fails absolutely, either deliberately or through mere incapacity, to keep the family habitat clean, the children in order, and the victuals eatable.

Now view the situation of the husband. The instant he submits to marriage, his wife obtains a large and inalienable share in his property, including all he may acquire in future; in most states the minimum is one-third, and, failing children, one-half. He cannot dispose of his real estate without her consent; he cannot even deprive her of it by will. She may bring up his children carelessly and idiotically, cursing them with abominable manners and poisoning their nascent minds against him, and he has no redress. She may neglect her home, gossip and lounge about all day, put impossible food upon his table, steal his small change, pry into his

private papers, hand over his home to the *Periplaneta americana*, accuse him falsely of preposterous adulteries, affront his friends, and lie about him to the neighbors—and he can do nothing. She may compromise his honor by indecent dressing, write letters to moving-picture actors, and expose him to ridicule by joining the suffragettes—and he is helpless.

Let him undertake the slightest rebellion, over and beyond mere rhetorical protest, and the whole force of the state comes down upon him. If he corrects her with the bastinado or locks her up, he is good for six months in jail. If he cuts off her revenues, he is incarcerated until he makes them good. And if he seeks surcease in flight, taking the children with him, he is pursued by the *gendarmerie*, brought back to his duties, and depicted in the public press as a scoundrelly kidnapper, fit only for the stonewall and the knout. In brief, *she* is under no legal

necessity whatsoever to carry out her part of the compact at the altar of God, whereas *he* faces instant disgrace and punishment for the slightest failure to observe its last letter. For a few grave crimes of commission, true enough, she may be proceeded against. Open adultery is a recreation that is denied to her. She cannot poison her husband. She must not assault him with edged tools, or leave him altogether, or strip off her few remaining garments and go naked. But for the vastly more various and numerous crimes of omission—and in sum they are more exasperating and intolerable than even overt felony—she cannot be brought to book at all.

§24.

The Emancipated Housewife.—These grievances of the modern husband are far from imaginary, nor are they, in essence, exceptional. The American housewife

was once famous for her unremitting diligence. She not only cooked, washed and ironed ; she also made shift to master such more complex arts as spinning, baking and brewing. Her expertness, perhaps, never reached a high level, but at all events she made a gallant effort. But that was long, long ago, before the new enlightenment rescued her. Today, in her average incarnation, she is not only incompetent (a lack, as I have argued, rather beyond her control) ; she is also filled with the notion that a conscientious discharge of her few remaining duties is, in some vague way, discreditable and degrading. To call her a good cook, I daresay, was never anything but flattery; the colonial cuisine was probably a fearful thing, indeed. But today the flattery turns into a sort of libel, and she resents it, or, at all events, does not welcome it. I used to know a literary man who married a woman because she had exceptional gifts in this department.

Years later, at one of her dinners, a friend of her husband's tried to please her by mentioning the fact, to which he had always been privy. But instead of being complimented, as a man might have been if told that his wife had married him because he was a good lawyer, or surgeon, or garment-worker, or ward leader, this unusual housekeeper, suffering a renaissance of usualness, denounced the guest as a liar, ordered him out of the house, and threatened to leave her husband.

This disdain of offices that, after all, are necessary, and might as well be faced with some show of cheerfulness, takes on the character of a definite cult, and the stray woman who attends to them faithfully is laughed at as a drudge and a fool, just as she is apt to be dismissed as a "brood sow" (I quote literally, craving absolution for the phrase: a jury of men, on very thin patriotic grounds, jailed the author of it) if she favors her lord with

viable issue. One result is the notorious villainousness of American cookery—a villainousness so painful to a cultured uvula that a French hack-driver, if his wife set its masterpieces before him, would brain her with his linoleum hat. To encounter a decent meal in an American home of the middle class, simple, sensibly chosen and competently cooked, becomes almost as startling as to meet a Sunday-school superintendent in a bordello, and a good deal rarer. Such a thing, in most of our large cities, scarcely has any existence. If the average American husband wants a sound dinner he must go to a restaurant to get it, just as if he wants to refresh himself with the society of charming and well-behaved children, he has to go to an orphan asylum. Only the immigrant among us can take his ease and invite his soul within his own house.

§25.

Equal Suffrage.—It is my sincere hope that nothing I have here exhibited will be mistaken by the nobility and gentry for moral indignation. No such feeling, in truth, is in my heart. Moral judgments, as old Friedrich used to say, are foreign to my nature. Setting aside the vast herd which shows no definable character at all, it seems to me that the minority distinguished by what is commonly regarded as an excess of sin is very much more admirable than the minority distinguished by an excess of virtue. My experience of the world has taught me that the average bartender is a far better fellow than the average prohibitionist, and that the average rogue is better company than the average poor drudge, and that the worst white-slave trader of my acquaintance is a decenter man than the best vice crusader. In the same way I am convinced that the average American woman, what-

ever her deficiencies, is greatly superior to the average American man. The very ease with which she defies and hornswoggles him in several capital situations of life is the clearest of proofs of her general superiority. She did not obtain her present high immunities at the domestic hearth as a gift from the gods, but only after a long and often bitter fight, and in that fight she exhibited forensic and tactical talents of a truly admirable order. There was no weakness of man that she did not penetrate and take advantage of. There was no trick that she did not put to effective use. There was no device so bold and inordinate that it daunted her.

One of the remaining fruits of her enterprise and pertinacity, now imminent, will be the extension of the suffrage. I believe that the majority of women, for reasons that I shall presently expose, are anything but suffragists. The mere statement of the current suffrage platform, and particu-

larly of the hopes embodied in it, is enough to set them laughing. They despise and abominate the professional suffragette, and know precisely what is the matter with her. A normal woman no more believes in ochlocracy in the nation than she believes in ochlocracy at her own fireside. She is far above all such man-made fallacies and sentimentalities; she snickers at them as she snickers at romantic love. Once she has the franchise throughout the nation and becomes at ease in its use, and so gets rid of the harridans who now bawl for it and will try to lead her, she will prove the truth of what I now opine. That is to say, she will proceed slowly but surely toward the great reform of reforms that the future holds in store: the recognition in law of the plain fact that government by alarm and orgy is unsound, unworkable and an infernal nuisance. She will ultimately procure, not the further extension of the

ballot to children, criminals and the insane—in brief, to those even more inflammable and idiotic than the male hinds who now have it—but its restriction, bit by bit, to the small minority that is intelligent, agnostic and self-possessed—say six women to one man. Thus, out of her greater instinct for reality, she will make democracy safe for a democracy.

The curse of man, and the cause of nearly all his woes, is his stupendous capacity for believing the incredible. He is forever embracing delusions, and each new one is worse than all that have gone before. But where is the delusion that women cherish—I mean habitually, firmly, passionately? Who will draw up a list of propositions, held and maintained by them in sober earnest, that are obviously not true? (I allude here, of course, to genuine women, not to suffragettes and other such pseudo-males). As for me, I should not like to undertake such a list.

I know of nothing, in fact, that properly belongs to it. Women, as a class, believe in none of the preposterous rights, duties and pious obligations that men are forever gabbling about. Their superior intelligence is in no way more eloquently demonstrated than by their ironical view of all such phantasmagoria. Their habitual attitude toward men is one of aloof disdain, and their habitual attitude toward what men believe in, and get into sweats about, and bellow for, is substantially the same. It takes twice as long to convert a body of women to some new fallacy as it takes to convert a body of men, and even then they halt, hesitate and are full of mordant criticisms. The women of Colorado had been voting for 21 years before they succumbed to prohibition sufficiently to allow the men voters of the state to adopt it; their own majority voice was against it to the end. During the interval the men voters of a dozen non-

suffrage states had gone shrieking to the mourners' bench. In California, enfranchised in 1911, the women rejected the dry revelation in 1914. Elsewhere, for one suffrage state that has succumbed to that balderdash, one may find at least three non-suffrage states that have gone the same route. In the South, where prohibition is most prosperous, most dishonest and most idiotic, and where all other such sure cures for the sorrows of the world are taken into politics immediately they are heard of, there is not a single suffrage state.

§26.

The Woman Voter.—The opposition to the extension of the suffrage, when it is not frankly sentimental and hence without any standing in logic whatsoever, is commonly based upon a mistaken fear of the woman voter. That fear arises out of confusing her with the suffragette. The

two, in fact, are quite distinct, and even antagonistic. The suffragette, as I shall show, is a woman who labors under an *idée fixe* and is thus off her balance; she represents that abnormal sub-species of woman which is almost male in its credulity and emotionability; among actual males her brother is the half-wit who swallows all of the new perunas as fast as they can be ladled out, first the single tax, then the recall of judges, then eugenics, then spiritism, then osteopathy, then the New Thought, then pacifism, then the Gary system, and so on. To judge the whole mass of women by these extravagant viragos, either as to their specific intentions or as to their normal habits of mind, is ignorant, unfair and full of error. The typical woman has a constitutional suspicion of all schemes for the instantaneous overhauling of the world; her experience of the impossibility of instilling sense and decency into one or two ac-

tual men, even on the most modest scale, is enough to convince her that the reformation of the whole race is hopeless. This woman believes, and quite accurately, that the average man is very much like her husband John and she knows very well that John is a vain, weak and knavish fellow, and that any effort to convert him into an archangel overnight is bound to come to grief. As for her view of the average creature of her own sex, it is marked by a cynicism so penetrating and so destructive that a clear statement of it would shock beyond endurance.

Thus there is not much danger that the women of the United States, once they get the ballot, will be run amuck by the suffragette spell-binders and perunamongers of today. For a short while, perhaps, the suffragettes will exercise a certain influence, for their victory will give them a prestige they now lack, and no other leaders of the women voters will be

immediately available. Moreover, the majority of men voters, being stupid and unobservant, will mistake them for spokesmen of the whole body of women, and so yield supinely to their blather. But soon or late—and probably disconcertingly soon—the great mass of sensible and agnostic women will turn upon them and depose them, and thereafter the woman vote will be no longer at the disposal of bogus Great Thinkers and jitney messiahs. If the suffragettes continue to fill the newspapers with propagandist piffle, once that change has been effected, it will be only as a minority sect of tolerated idiots, like the Swedenborgians, Christian Scientists, initiators and referendors, parlor Socialists, Seventh Day Adventists and other such Bolsheviks of today. This has been the history of the extension of the suffrage in practically all of the suffrage states, and it will be repeated in the nation. Women are not

taken in by quackery as readily as men are; the hardness of their shell of logic makes it difficult to penetrate to their emotions. For one woman who testifies publicly that she has been cured of cancer by some swindling patent medicine, there are at least 20 masculine witnesses. Even such elixirs as Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, ostensibly remedies for specifically feminine ills, anatomically impossible in the male, are chiefly swallowed, so an intelligent druggist tells me, by men.

My own belief, based on elaborate inquiries and long meditation, is that the grant of the ballot to women will mark the beginning of an improvement in our politics, and, in the end, in our whole theory of government. As things stand, an intelligent grappling with some of the capital problems of the commonwealth is almost impossible. A politician normally prospers among us, not in proportion as

his principles are sound and his honor incorruptible, but in proportion as he excels in the manufacture of sonorous phrases, and the invention of imaginary perils and imaginary defenses against them. Our politics thus degenerates into a mere viewing with alarm and pursuit of bugaboos; the male voter, a coward as well as an ass, is forever taking fright at a new one and electing some mountebank to lay it. For a hundred years past we have scarcely had a political campaign that was not based upon some preposterous fear—first of capital and then of Socialism, first of slavery and then of the manumitted slave, first of the old and then of the novel. It is a peculiarity of women that they are not easily set off by such alarms, that they do not fall readily into such facile tumults and phobias. What starts a male mass-meeting to snuffling and trembling most violently is precisely the thing that would cause a female mass-meeting to sniff.

What we need, to ward off mobocracy and safeguard the Constitution and a republican form of government, is more of this sniffing. What we need—and in the end it must come—is a sniff so powerful that it will call a halt upon the navigation of the ship from the forecastle, and put a competent staff on the bridge, and lay a course that is describable in intelligible terms.

The officers nominated by the male electorate are usually chosen, not for their competence but for their mere talent for pishposh; they reflect accurately the male weakness for whatever is rhetorical and sentimental and feeble and untrue. Consider, for example, what happens in a salient case. Every three years the male voters of every state (the female voters have been too small in number hitherto to determine the result) chose from among themselves one who is put forward as the man most fit, of all resident men,

to represent them in the United States Senate. He is chosen after interminable discussion; his qualifications are thoroughly canvassed; very large powers and dignities are put into his hands. Well, what do we commonly find when we examine this gentleman? We find, not a profound thinker, not a leader of sound opinion, not a man of notable sense, but merely a wholesaler of notions so infantile that they must needs disgust a sentient suckling—in brief, a spouting geyser of fallacies and sentimentalities, a cataract of unsupported assumptions and hollow moralizings, a tedious phrase-merchant and platitudinarian, a fellow whose noblest flights of thought are flattened when they are called comprehensible.

This is a typical male champion. I do not venture upon the cruelty of comparing his bombastic flummuries to the clear reasoning of a woman of like fame and

position; all I ask of you is that you weigh them, for sense, for shrewdness, for intelligent grasp of obscure relations, for intellectual honesty and courage, with the ideas of the average midwife.

§27.

The Suffragette.—I have spoken with some disdain of the suffragette. What is the matter with her is simple: she is a woman who has carried her envy of certain of the superficial privileges of men to such a point that it takes on the character of an obsession, and makes her blind to their valueless and often chiefly imaginary character. In particular, she centers this frenzy of hers upon one definite privilege, to wit, the alleged privilege of promiscuity in amour, the modern *droit du seigneur*. Read the books of the chief suffragette wild women, and you will find running through them an hysterical denunciation of what is called the double

standard of morality; there is, indeed, a whole literature devoted exclusively to it. The existence of this double standard seems to drive the poor girls half frantic. They bellow raucously for its abrogation, and demand that the frivolous male be visited with even more idiotic penalties than those which now visit the aberrant female; some even advocate gravely his mutilation by surgery, that he may be forced into rectitude by a physical disability for sin.

All this, of course, is hocus-pocus, and the judicious are not deceived by it for an instant. What these virtuous beldames actually desire in their hearts is not that the male be reduced to chemical purity, but that the franchise of dalliance be extended to themselves. The most elementary acquaintance with Freudian psychology exposes their secret animus. Unable to ensnare males under the present system, or at all events, unable to ensnare

males sufficiently appetizing to arouse the envy of other women (for the average suffragette husband, in all candor, must be set down a sorry stick, indeed), they leap to the theory that it would be easier if the rules were less exacting. This theory exposes their deficiency in the chief character of their sex: accurate observation. The fact is that, even if they possessed the freedom that men are supposed to possess, they would still find it difficult to achieve their ambition, for the average man, whatever his stupidity, is at least keen enough in judgment to prefer a single wink from a genuinely attractive woman to the last delirious favors of the typical suffragette. Thus the theory of the whoopers and snorters of the cause, in its esoteric as well as in its public aspect, is unsound and imbecile. They are simply women who, in their tastes and processes of mind, are two-thirds men, and the fact explains their failure to

achieve presentable husbands, or even consolatory betrayal, quite as effectively as it explains the ready credence they give to political and philosophical absurdities.

§28.

A Mythical Dare-devil.—The truth is that the picture of male carnality that such women conjure up belongs almost wholly to fable, as I have already observed in dealing with the sophistries of Dr. Eliza Burt Gamble, a paralogist on a somewhat higher plane. As they depict him in their fevered treatises on illegitimacy, white-slave trading and *ophthalmia neonatorum*, the average male adult of the Christian and cultured countries leads a life of gaudy lubricity, rolling magnificently from one liaison to another, and with an almost endless queue of ruined telephone operators, manicurists, milliners, chorus girls, charwomen,

parlor-maids and waitresses behind him, all dying of poison and despair. The life of man, as these furiously envious ones see it, is the life of a leading actor in a boulevard *revue*. He is polygamous, multigamous, myriadgamous; an insatiable and inconscionable debauchee, a monster of promiscuity; prodigiously unfaithful to his wife, and even to his friends' wives; fathomlessly libidinous and superbly happy.

Needless to say, this picture bears no more relation to the facts than a dissertation on major strategy by a military "expert" promoted from the sporting page. If the chief suffragette scare mongers (I speak without any embarrassing naming of names) were attractive enough to men to get near enough to enough men to know enough about them for their purpose they would paralyze the chautauquas and boarding schools with no such cajoling libels. As a matter of sober fact,

the average man of our time and nation is quite incapable of all these incandescent and intriguing divertisements. He is far more virtuous than they make him out, far less schooled in sin, far less enterprising and ruthless. I do not say, of course, that he is pure in heart, for the chances are that he isn't; what I do say is that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, he is pure in act, even in the face of temptation. And why? For several main reasons, not to go into minor ones. One is that he lacks the courage. Another is that he lacks the money. Another is that he is fundamentally moral, and has a conscience. It takes more sinful initiative than he has in him to plunge into any affair save the most casual and sordid; it takes more ingenuity and intrepidity than he has in him to carry it off; it takes more money than he can conceal from his consort to finance it. A man may force his actual wife to share the dir-

est poverty, but even the least vampirish woman of the third part demands to be courted in what, considering his station in life, is the grand manner, and the expenses of that grand manner scare off all save a small minority of specialists in deception. So long, indeed, as a wife knows her husband's income accurately, she has a sure means of holding him to his oaths.

Even more effective than the fiscal barrier is the barrier of poltroonery. The one character that distinguishes man from the other higher vertebrata, indeed, is his excessive timorousness, his easy yielding to alarms, his incapacity for adventure without a crowd behind him. In his normal incarnation he is no more capable of initiating an extra-legal affair—at all events, above the mawkish harmlessness of a flirting match with a manicure girl—than he is of scaling the battlements of hell. He likes to think of himself doing it, just as he likes to think of himself leading a

cavalry charge or climbing the Matterhorn. Often, indeed, his vanity leads him to imagine the thing done, and he admits, by winks and blushes, that he is a bad one. But at the bottom of all that tawdry pretense there is usually nothing more material than an oafish smirk at some disgusted shop-girl, or a scraping of shins under the table, or an evening at some obscene Biblical play. Let any woman who is disquieted by reports of her husband's derelictions figure to herself how long it would have taken him to propose to her if left to his own enterprise, and then let her ask herself if so pusillanimous a creature could be imaged in the rôle of Don Giovanni.

Finally, there is his conscience — the accumulated sediment of ancestral faint-heartedness in countless generations, with vague religious fears and superstitions to leaven and mellow it. What! a conscience? Yes, dear friends, a conscience.

That conscience may be imperfect, inept, unintelligent, brummagem. It may be indistinguishable, at times, from the mere fear that someone may be looking. It may be shot through with hypocrisy, stupidity, play-acting. But nevertheless, as consciences go in Christendom, it is genuinely entitled to the name—and it is always in action. A man, remember, is not a being *in vacuo*; he is the fruit and slave of the environment that bathes him; as Haeckel puts it, the cell does not act, it reacts. One cannot go to the United States Senate or to the penitentiary without becoming, in some measure, a rascal. One cannot fall overboard without shipping water. One cannot pass through Harvard without carrying away scars. And by the same token one cannot live and have one's being in a great moral republic, year in and year out, without falling, to some extent at least, under that moral obsession which is the national hall-mark, the label

of the free American, the brand of the emancipated Presbyterian. A citizen of these States, his nose buried in Samuel Butler, the *New Republic*, "Man and Superman," and other such advanced literature, may caress himself with the notion that he is an immoralist, that his soul is full of soothing sin, that he has cut himself loose from the International Sunday-school Lessons. But all the while there is a part of him that remains a sound Puritan, a moralist, a right-thinking and forward-looking man, just as there are parts of him that remain a baseball fan and a lodge joiner. And that part, in times of stress, asserts itself. It may not worry him on ordinary occasions. It may not stop him when he swears, or takes a nip behind the door, or goes motoring on Sunday; it may even let him alone when he goes to a leg-show. But the moment a concrete Temptress rises before him, her nose snow-white, her lips rouged, her eye-

lashes drooping provokingly—the moment such an abandoned wench has at him, and his lack of ready funds begins to conspire with his lack of courage to assault and wobble him—at that precise moment his conscience flares into function, and so finishes his business. First he sees difficulty, then he sees danger, then he sees wrong. The result? The result is that he slinks off in trepidation, and another vampire is baffled of her prey.

§29.

The Origin of a Delusion.—The origin of the delusion that the average man is a King Leopold, with the amorous experience of a guinea pig, is not far to seek. It lies in three factors, the which I rehearse it briefly:

1. The idiotic vanity of men, leading to their eternal boasting, either by open lying or sinister hints.
2. The notions of vice crusaders, Sunday-school superintendents and other such libidinous poltroons

as to what they would do themselves if they had the courage.

3. The ditto of certain suffragettes as to ditto ditto.

Here you have the genesis of a generalization that gives women a great deal of needless uneasiness and vastly augments the natural conceit of men. Some pornographic Methodist, in the discharge of his duties as director of an anti-vice society, puts in an evening plowing through such books as "Night Life in Chicago," "The Confessions of a White Slaver," "My Little Sister," the Cena Trimalchionis of Gaius Petronius and II Samuel. From this perusal he arises with the conviction that life amid the red lights must be one stupendous whirl of deviltry, that the shoe clerks he sees in Broadway at night are out for revels that would have caused protests in Sodom and Nineveh, that the average man who chooses hell leads an existence comparable to that of a Mormon bishop, that the

world outside the Bible class is packed like a sardine-can with betrayed sales-women, that every man who doesn't believe that Jonah swallowed the whale spends his whole leisure leaping through the seventh hoop of the Decalogue. "If I were not saved and anointed of God," whispers the vice director into his own ear, "that is what I, the Rev. Dr. Jasper Barebones, would be doing. The late King David did it; he was human, and hence immoral. The late King Edward VII was not beyond suspicion: the very numeral in his name has its suggestions. Millions of others go the same route. . . . *Ergo*, Up guards and at 'em! Bring me the pad of blank warrants! Order out the searchlights and scaling-ladders! Swear in 400 more policewomen! Let us chase these hell-hounds out of Christendom, and make the world safe for monogamy, poor working girls, and infant damnation!"

Thus the hound of heaven, arguing fallaciously from his own secret aspirations. Where he makes his mistake is in assuming that the unconsecrated, while sharing his longing to debauch and betray, are free from his other weaknesses, *e. g.*, his timidity, his lack of resourcefulness, his conscience. As I have said, they are not. The vast majority of those who appear in the public haunts of sin are there, not to engage in overt acts of ribaldry, but merely to tremble agreeably upon the edge of the abyss. They are the same skittish experimentalists, precisely, who throng the midway at a world's fair, and go to smutty shows, and take in sex magazines, and read the sort of books that our Methodist friend reads. They like to conjure up the charms of carnality, and to help out their somewhat sluggish imaginations by actual peeps at it, but when it comes to taking a forthright header into the sulphur they usually fail

to muster up the courage. For one shoe clerk who succumbs to the houris of the Broadway pave, there are 500 who succumb to lack of means, the warnings of Dr. Sylvanus Stall, and their own depressing consciences. For one "Fifth Avenue clubman"—*i. e.*, whiskey drummer or suburban deacon—who invades the department stores, engages the affection of some innocent miss, lures her into infamy and then sells her to the Italians, there are 1,000 who never get any further than asking the price of cologne water and discharging a few furtive winks. And for one American husband who maintains a blonde chorus girl in oriental luxury around the corner, there are 10,000 who are as true to their wives, year in and year out, as so many convicts in the death-house, and would be no more capable of any such loathsome malpractice, even in the face of free opportunity, than they

would be of cutting off the ears of their young.

I am sorry to blow up so much romance, but the facts are the facts, and curst be that dastard who would dodge them or pull their teeth. In particular, I am sorry for the suffragettes who specialize in the double standard, for when they get into pantaloons at last, and have the vote and the new freedom, they will discover to their sorrow that they have been pursuing a chimera—that there is really no such animal as the male anarchist they have been denouncing and envying—that the wholesale fornication of man, at least, in a country so hag-ridden by moral qualms and hesitations as this one, has little more actual existence than honest advertising or sound cooking. They have followed the pornomaniacs in embracing a piece of buncombe, and when the day of deliverance comes it will turn to ashes in their arms.

Their error, as I say, lies in overestimating the courage and enterprise of man. They themselves, barring out mere physical valor, a quality in which the average man is far exceeded by the average jackal or wolf, have more of both. If the consequences, to a man, of the slightest descent from virginity were one-tenth as swift and barbarous as the consequences to a young girl in like case, it would take a *capias ad computandum*, and perhaps even a *capias utlagatum*, to dredge up a single male flouter of that *lex talionis* in the whole of this incomparable republic. As things stand today, even with the odds so greatly in his favor, the average male hesitates and is thus not lost. Turn to the statistics of the vice crusaders if you doubt it. They show that the weekly receipts of female recruits upon the wharves of sin are always more than the demand; that more young women enter upon the vermillion career than can make

respectable livings at it; that the pressure of the temptation they hold out is the chief factor in corrupting our sophomores. What was the first act of the Army when it began summoning its young clerks and college boys and plow hands to conscription camps? Its first act was to mark off a so-called moral zone around each camp, and to secure it with trenches and machine guns, and to put a lot of volunteer tar-magants to patrolling it, that the assembled *jeunesse* might be protected in their rectitude from the immoral advances of the adjacent milkmaids and poor working girls.

§30.

Women as Martyrs.—I have given three reasons for the prosperity of the notion that man is a natural polygamist, bent eternally upon fresh dives into Lake of Brimstone No. 7. To these another should be added: the thirst for martyr-

dom which shows itself in so many women, particularly under the higher forms of civilization. This unhealthy appetite, in fact, may be described as one of civilization's diseases; it is almost unheard of in more primitive societies. The savage woman, unprotected by her rude culture and forced to heavy and incessant labor, has retained her physical strength and with it her honesty and self-respect. The civilized woman, gradually degenerated by a greater ease, and helped down that hill by the growing pretensions of civilized man, has turned her infirmity into a virtue, and so affects a feebleness that is actually far beyond the reality. It is by this route that she can most effectively disarm masculine distrust, and get what she wants. Man is flattered by any acknowledgment, however insincere, of his superior strength and capacity. He likes to be leaned upon, appealed to, followed docilely. And this tribute to his

might caresses him on the psychic plane as well as on the plane of the obviously physical. He not only enjoys helping a woman over a gutter; he also enjoys helping her dry her tears. The result is the vast pretense that characterizes the relations of the sexes under civilization—the double pretense of man's cunning and autonomy and of woman's dependence and deference. Man is always looking for some one to boast to; woman is always looking for a shoulder to put her head on.

This feminine affectation, of course, has gradually taken on the force of a fixed habit, and so it has got a certain support, by a familiar process of self-delusion, in reality. The civilized woman inherits that habit as she inherits her cunning. She is born half convinced that she is really as weak and helpless as she later pretends to be, and the prevailing folklore offers her endless corroboration. One

of the resultant phenomena is the delight in martyrdom that one so often finds in women, and particularly in the least alert and introspective of them. They take a heavy, unhealthy pleasure in suffering; it subtly pleases them to be hard put upon; they like to picture themselves as slaughtered saints. Thus they always find something to complain of; the very conditions of domestic life give them a superabundance of clinical material. And if, by any chance, such material shows a falling off, they are uneasy and unhappy. Let a woman have a husband whose conduct is not reasonably open to question, and she will invent mythical offenses to make him bearable. And if her invention fails she will be plunged into the utmost misery and humiliation. This fact probably explains many mysterious divorces: the husband was not too bad, but too good. For public opinion among women, remember, does not favor the woman who is

full of a placid contentment and has no masculine torts to report; if she says that her husband is wholly satisfactory she is looked upon as a numskull even more dense than he is himself. A man, speaking of his wife to other men, always praises her extravagantly. Boasting about her soothes his vanity; he likes to stir up the envy of his fellows. But when two women talk of their husbands it is mainly atrocities that they describe. The most esteemed woman gossip is the one with the longest and most various repertoire of complaints.

This yearning for martyrdom explains one of the commonly noted characters of women: their eager flair for bearing physical pain. As we have seen, they have actually a good deal less endurance than men; massive injuries shock them more severely and kill them more quickly. But when acute algesia is unaccompanied by any profounder phenomena they are un-

doubtedly able to bear it with a far greater show of resignation. The reason is not far to seek. In pain a man sees only an invasion of his liberty, strength and self-esteem. It floors him, masters him, and makes him ridiculous. But a woman, more subtle and devious in her processes of mind, senses the dramatic effect that the spectacle of her suffering makes upon the spectators, already filled with compassion for her feebleness. She would thus much rather be praised for facing pain with a martyr's fortitude than for devising some means of getting rid of it—the first thought of a man. No woman could have invented chloroform, nor, for that matter, alcohol. Both drugs offer an escape from situations and experiences that, even in aggravated forms, women relish. The woman who drinks as men drink—that is, to raise her threshold of sensation and ease the agony of living—nearly always shows a deficiency in fem-

inine characters and an undue preponderance of masculine characters. Almost invariably you will find her vain and boastful, and full of other marks of that bombastic exhibitionism which is so sterlingly male.

§31.

Pathological Effects.—What we have here, of course, is simply a pathological character. Women show many others of the same sort. To be a woman under our Christian civilization, indeed, means to live a life that is heavy with repression and dissimulation, and this repression and dissimulation, in the long run, cannot fail to produce effects that are indistinguishable from disease. You will find some of them described at length in any handbook on psychoanalysis. The Viennese, Adler, and the Dane, Poul Bjerre, argue, indeed, that womanliness itself, as it is encountered under Christianity, is a disease. All

women suffer from a suppressed revolt against the inhibitions forced upon them by our artificial culture, and this suppressed revolt, by well known Freudian means, produces a complex of mental symptoms that is familiar to all of us. At one end of the scale we observe the suffragette, with her grotesque adoption of the male belief in laws, phrases and talismans, and her hysterical demand for a sexual libertarianism that she could not put to use if she had it. And at the other end we find the snuffling and neurotic woman, with her bogus martyrdom, her extravagant pruderies and her pathological delusions. As Ibsen observed long ago, this is a man's world. Women have broken many of their old chains, but they are still enmeshed in a formidable network of man-made taboos and sentimentalities, and it will take them another generation, at least, to get genuine freedom. That this is true is shown by the deep

unrest that yet marks the sex, despite its recent progress toward equal rights. It is almost impossible to find a man who honestly wishes that he were a woman, but almost every woman, at some time or other in her life, is gnawed by a regret that she is not a man.

Two of the hardest things that women have to bear are (*a*) the stupid masculine disinclination to admit their intellectual superiority, or even their equality, or even their possession of a normal human equipment for thought, and (*b*) the equally stupid masculine doctrine that they constitute a special and ineffable species of vertebrata, without the natural instincts and appetites of the order—to adapt a phrase from Haeckel, that they are transcendental and almost gaseous mammals, and marked by a complete lack of certain salient mammalian characters. The first imbecility has already concerned us at length. One finds traces of it even in

works professedly devoted to disposing of it. In one such book, for example, I come upon this: "What all the skill and constructive capacity of the physicians in the Crimean War had failed to accomplish Florence Nightingale accomplished by her beautiful femininity and nobility of soul." In other words, by her possession of some recondite and indescribable magic, sharply separated from the ordinary mental processes of man. The theory is unsound and preposterous. Miss Nightingale accomplished her useful work, not by magic, but by hard common sense. The problem before her was simply one of organization. Many men had tackled it, and all of them had failed stupendously. What she did was to bring her feminine sharpness of wit, her feminine clear-thinking, to bear upon it. Thus attacked, it yielded quickly, and once it had been brought to order it was easy for other persons to carry on what she had

begun. But the opinion of a man's world still prefers to credit her success to some mysterious angelical quality, unstatable in lucid terms and having no more reality than the divine inspiration of an archbishop. Her extraordinarily acute and accurate intelligence is thus conveniently put upon the table, and the *amour propre* of man is kept inviolate. To confess frankly that she had more sense than any male Englishman of her generation would be to utter a truth too harsh to be bearable.

The second delusion commonly shows itself in the theory, already referred to, that women are devoid of any sex instinct—that they submit to the odious caresses of the lubricious male only by a powerful effort of the will, and with the sole object of discharging their duty to posterity. It would be impossible to discuss this delusion with proper candor and exactness in a work designed for reading

aloud in the domestic circle; the plain facts would cause an intolerable scandal. All I can do is to refer the readers to the works of any competent authority on the psychology of sex, say Ellis, or to the confidences (if they are obtainable) of any complaisant bachelor of his acquaintance. Suffice it to say here that the theory is no more than a corollary of the larger theory that women constitute a caste of austere and almost disembodied spirits, showing neither the mental nor the physical processes of men. That theory is buncombe. Its roots lie in masculine conceit, and on the present plane it is reinforced by masculine superstition—viz., the superstition of sin. This superstition, as I shall display in a forthcoming work on Puritanism, is responsible for most of the sorrows of the western world. It makes relentless war upon all healthy human impulses, upon all honesty in word and act, upon everything that is natural, and

frank, and commendable. It is the largest and damndest of all the curses that Christianity has unloaded upon a groaning universe.

§32.

Christianity. — The glad tidings preached by Christ were obviously highly favorable to women; he lifted them to equality before the Lord when their very possession of souls was still doubted by the majority of rival theologians. Moreover, he esteemed them socially and set value upon their sagacity, and one of the most disdained of their sex, a lady formerly in public life, was among his regular advisers. Mariolatry is thus by no means the invention of the medieval popes, as the Methodists and other such hoofers of the sacred sciences would have us believe. On the contrary, it is plainly discernible in the Four Gospels. What the medieval popes actually invented (or,

to be precise, reinvented, for they simply smouched the elements of it from St. Paul) was the doctrine of women's inferiority, the precise opposite of the thing credited to them. Committed, for sound reasons of discipline, to the celibacy of the clergy, they had to support it by depicting all traffic with women in the light of a hazardous and ignominious business. The result was the deliberate organization and development of the theory of female triviality, lack of responsibility and general looseness of mind. Woman became a sort of devil, but without the admired intelligence of the regular demons. The appearance of women saints, however, offered a constant and embarrassing criticism of this idiotic doctrine. If occasional women were fit to sit upon the right hand of God—and they were often proving it, and forcing the church to acknowledge it—then surely *all* women could not be as bad as the books made them out. There

thus arose the concept of the angelic woman, the natural vestal; we see her at full length in the romances of medieval chivalry. What emerged in the end was a sort of double doctrine, first that women were devils and secondly that they were angels. This preposterous dualism has merged into a compromise dogma in modern times. By that dogma it is held, on the one hand, that women are unintelligent and immoral, and on the other hand, that they are free from all those weaknesses of the flesh which distinguish men. This, roughly speaking, is the notion of the average male numskull today.

Christianity has thus both libelled women and flattered them, but with the weight always on the side of the libel. It is therefore, at bottom, their enemy, as the religion of Christ, now wholly extinct, was their friend. And as they gradually throw off the shackles that have bound them for a thousand years they show ap-

preciation of the fact. Women, indeed, are not naturally religious, and they are growing less and less religious as year chases year. Their ordinary devotion has little if any pious exaltation in it; it is a routine practice, forced on them by the masculine notion that an appearance of holiness is proper to their lowly station, and a masculine feeling that church-going somehow keeps them in order, and out of doings that would be less reassuring. When they exhibit any genuine religious fervor, its sexual character is usually so obvious that even the majority of men are cognizant of it. Women never go flocking ecstatically to a church in which the agent of God in the pulpit is an elderly asthmatic with a watchful wife. When one finds them driven to frenzies by the merits of the saints, and weeping over the sorrows of the heathen, and rushing out to haul the whole vicinage up to grace, and spending hours on their

knees in hysterical abasement before the heavenly throne, it is quite safe to assume, even without an actual visit, that the ecclesiastic who has worked the miracle is a fair and toothsome fellow, and a good deal more aphrodisiacal than learned. All the great preachers to women in modern times have been men of suave and ingratiating habit, and the great majority of them, from Henry Ward Beecher up and down, have been taken, soon or late, in transactions far more suitable to the boudoir than to the footstool of the Almighty. Their famous killings have always been made among the silliest sort of women—the sort, in brief, who fall so short of the normal acumen of their sex that they are bemused by mere beauty in men.

Such men are in a minority, and so the sex shows a good deal fewer religious enthusiasts *per mille* than the sex of sentiment and belief. Attending, several years

ago, the gladiatorial shows of the Rev. Dr. Billy Sunday, I was constantly struck by the great preponderance of males in the bull-ring devoted to the saved. Men of all ages and in enormous numbers came swarming down the sawdust trail, loudly bawling for help against their sins, but the women were anything but numerous, and the few who appeared were chiefly either chlorotic adolescents or pathetic old *Saufschwestern*. For six nights running I sat directly beneath the gifted exhorter without seeing a single female convert of what statisticians call the child-bearing age—that is, the age of maximum intelligence and charm. Among the male simpletons bagged by his yells during this time were the president of a railroad, half a dozen rich bankers and merchants, and the former governor of a presumably civilized state. But not a woman of comparable position or dignity. Not a

woman that any self-respecting bachelor would care to chuck under the chin.

This cynical view of religious emotionalism, and with it of the whole stock of ecclesiastical balderdash, is probably responsible, at least in part, for the reluctance of women to enter upon the sacerdotal career. In those denominations which still bar them from the pulpit—usually on the imperfectly concealed ground that they are not equal to its alleged demands upon the morals and the intellect—one never hears of them protesting against the prohibition; they are quite content to leave the degrading imposture to men, who are better fitted for it by talent and conscience. And in those baroque denominations which admit them they show no eagerness to put on the stole and chasuble. When the first clergywoman appeared in the United States, back in the half-forgotten era of "females," bustles and antimacassars, it

was predicted by alarmists that men would be driven out of the pulpit by the new competition. Nothing of the sort has occurred, nor is it in prospect. The whole corps of female divines in the country might be herded into one small room. Women, when literate at all, are far too intelligent to make effective ecclesiastics. Their sharp sense of reality is in endless opposition to the whole sacerdotal masquerade, and their cynical humor stands against the snorting that is inseparable from pulpit oratory.

Those women who enter upon the religious life are almost invariably moved by some motive distinct from mere pious inflammation. It is commonplace, indeed, that, in Catholic countries, girls are driven into convents by economic considerations or by disasters of amour far oftener than they are drawn there by the hope of heaven. Read the lives of the female saints, and you will see how many

of them tried marriage and failed at it before ever they turned to religion. In Protestant lands very few women adopt it as a profession at all, and among the few a secular impulse is almost always visible. The girl who is suddenly overcome by a desire to minister to the heathen in foreign lands is nearly invariably found, on inspection, to be a girl harboring a theory that it would be agreeable to marry some heroic missionary. In point of fact, she duly marries him. At home, perhaps, she has found it impossible to get a husband, but in the remoter marches of China, Senegal and Somaliland, with no white competition present, it is equally impossible to fail.

What remains of the alleged piety of women is little more than a social habit, reinforced in most communities by a paucity of other and more inviting diversions. If you have ever observed the women of Spain and Italy at their devo-

tions you need not be told how much the worship of God may be a mere excuse for relaxation and gossip. These women, in their daily lives, are surrounded by a formidable network of medieval taboos; their normal human desire for ease and freedom in intercourse is opposed by masculine distrust and superstition; they meet no strangers; they see and hear nothing new. In the house of the Most High they escape from that vexing routine. Here they may brush shoulders with a crowd. Here, so to speak, they may crane their mental necks and stretch their spiritual legs. Here, above all, they may come into some sort of contact with men relatively more affable, cultured and charming than their husbands and fathers —to wit, with the rev. clergy. Elsewhere in Christendom, though women are not quite so relentlessly watched and penned up, they feel much the same need of variety and excitement, and both are like-

wise on tap in the temples of the Lord. No one, I am sure, need be told that the average missionary society or church sewing circle is not primarily a religious organization. Its actual purpose is precisely that of the absurd clubs and secret orders to which the lower and least resourceful classes of men belong: it offers a means of refreshment, of self-expression, of personal display, of political manipulation and boasting, and, if the pastor happens to be interesting, of discreet and almost lawful intrigue. In the course of a life largely devoted to the study of pietistic phenomena, I have never met a single woman who cared an authentic damn for the actual heathen. The attraction in their salvation is always almost purely social. Women go to church for the same reason that farmers and convicts go to church.

Finally, there is the æsthetic lure. Religion, in most parts of America at least, holds out the only bait of beauty that the

inhabitants are ever cognizant of. It offers music, dim lights, relatively ambitious architecture, eloquence, formality and mystery, the caressing meaninglessness that is at the heart of poetry. Women are far more responsive to such things than men, who are ordinarily quite as devoid of æsthetic sensitiveness as so many oxen. The attitude of the typical man toward beauty in its various forms is, in fact, an attitude of suspicion and hostility. He does not regard a work of art as merely inert and stupid; he regards it as, in some indefinable way, positively offensive; he would blush to be caught showing the enthusiasm over it that he lavishes, say, on a war hero or a baseball player. The cult of beauty, to him, is a cult of flabbiness and affectation, with overtones of indecency. He sees the artist as a professional voluptuary and scoundrel, and would no more trust him in his household than he would trust a colored bishop in

his hen-coop. It was men, and not women, who invented such sordid and literal faiths as Methodism, with their antipathy to beautiful ritual, their obscene buttonholing of God, their great talent for reducing the ineffable mystery of religion to a mere bawling of idiots. The normal woman, in so far as she has any religion at all, moves irresistibly toward the Latin rite, with its poetical obscurantism. The evangelical Protestant denominations have a hard time holding her. She can no more be an actual Methodist than a gentleman can be a Methodist.

This inclination toward beauty, of course, is dismissed by the average male blockhead as no more than a feeble sentimentality. The truth is that it is precisely the opposite. It is surely not sentimentality to be moved by the stately and mysterious ceremony of the mass, or even, say, by those timid imitations of it which one observes in certain Protestant

churches. Such proceedings, whatever their defects from the standpoint of pure æsthetic, are at all events vastly more beautiful than any of the everyday acts of the folk who take part in them. They lift themselves above the barren utilitarianism of everyday life, and no less above the maudlin sentimentalities that men seek pleasure in. They offer a means of escape, convenient and inviting, from that sordid routine of thought and occupation which women revolt against so pertinaciously.

§33.

The Ethics of Women.—I have said that the religion preached by Jesus (now wholly extinct in the world) was highly favorable to women. This was not saying, of course, that women have repaid the compliment by adopting it. They are, in fact, indifferent Christians in the primitive sense, just as they are bad Christians in the antagonistic modern sense, and particu-

larly on the side of ethics. If they actually accept the renunciations commanded by the Sermon on the Mount, it is only in an effort to flout their substance under cover of their appearance. No woman is really humble; she is merely politic. No woman, with a free choice before her, chooses self-immolation; the most she genuinely desires in that direction is a spectacular martyrdom. No woman delights in poverty. No woman yields when she can prevail. No woman is honestly meek.

In their practical ethics, indeed, women pay little heed to the precepts of the Founder of Christianity, and the fact has passed into proverb. Their gentleness, like the so-called honor of men, is visible only in situations which offer them no menace. The moment a woman finds herself confronted by an antagonist genuinely dangerous, either to her own security or to the well-being of those under her protection—say a child or a husband—she

displays a bellicosity which stops at nothing, however outrageous. In the courts of law one occasionally encounters a male extremist who tells the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, even when it is against his cause, but no such woman has ever been on view since the days of Blackstone. It is, indeed, an axiom of the bar that women invariably lie upon the stand, and the whole effort of a barrister who has one for a client is devoted to keeping her within bounds, that the obtuse suspicions of the male jury may not be unduly aroused. Women litigants almost always win their cases, not, as is commonly assumed, because the jurymen fall in love with them, but simply and solely because they are clear-headed, resourceful, implacable and without qualms.

What is here visible in the halls of justice, in the face of a vast technical equipment for combatting mendacity, is

ten times more obvious in freer fields. Any man who is so unfortunate as to have a serious controversy with a woman, say in the departments of finance, theology or amour, must inevitably carry away from it a sense of having passed through a dangerous and almost gruesome experience. Women not only bite in the clinches; they bite even in open fighting; they have a dental reach, so to speak, of amazing length. No attack is so desperate that they will not undertake it, once they are aroused; no device is so unfair and horrifying that it stays them. In my early days, desiring to improve my prose, I served for a year or so as reporter in a police court, and during this time I heard perhaps 400 cases of so-called wife-beating. The husbands, in their defense, almost invariably pleaded justification, and some of them told such tales of studied atrocity at the domestic hearth, both psychic and physical, that the learned judge

discharged them with tears in his eyes and the very catchpolls in the courtroom had to blow their noses. Many more men than women go insane, and many more married men than single men. The fact puzzles no one who has had the same opportunity that I had to find out what goes on, year in and year out, behind the doors of apparently happy homes. A woman, if she hates her husband (and many of them do), can make life so sour and obnoxious to him that even death in the electric chair seems sweet by comparison.

This hatred, of course, is often, and perhaps almost invariably, quite justified. To be the wife of an ordinary man, indeed, is an experience that must be very hard to bear. The hollowness and vanity of the fellow, his petty meanness and stupidity, his puling sentimentality and credulity, his bombastic air of a cock on a dung-hill, his anesthesia to all whispers and summonings of the spirit, above all, his

loathsome clumsiness in amour—all these things must revolt any woman above the lowest. To be the object of the oafish affections of such a creature, even when they are honest and profound, cannot be expected to give any genuine joy to a woman of sense and refinement. His performance as a gallant, as Honore de Balzac long ago observed, unescapably suggests a gorilla's efforts to play the violin. Women survive the tragi-comedy only by dint of their great capacity for play-acting. They are able to act so realistically that often they deceive even themselves; the average woman's contentment, indeed, is no more than a tribute to her histrionism. But there must be innumerable revolts in secret, even so, and one sometimes wonders that so few women, with the thing so facile and so safe, poison their husbands. Perhaps it is not quite as rare as vital statistics make it out: the death-rate among husbands is very much

higher than among wives. More than once, indeed, I have gone to the funeral of an acquaintance who died suddenly, and observed a curious glitter in the eyes of the inconsolable widow.

Women have few serious transactions in life save with husbands and potential husbands; the business of marriage is their dominant concern from adolescence to senility. When they step outside their habitual circle they show the same alert and eager wariness that they exhibit within it. A man who has dealings with them must keep his wits about him, and even when he is most cautious he is often flabbergasted by their sudden and unconscionable forays. Whenever a woman goes into trade she quickly gets a reputation as a sharp trader. Every little town in America has its Mme. Bonaparte or its Hetty Green, each sweating blood from turnips, each the terror of all the male mortgage sharks of the neighbor-

hood. The man who tackles such an amazon of barter takes his fortune into his hands; he has little more chance of success against the feminine technique in business than he has against the feminine technic in marriage. In both arenas the advantage of women lies in their freedom from sentimentality. In business they address themselves wholly to their own profit, and give no thought whatever to the hopes, aspirations and *amour propre* of their antagonists. And in the duel of sex they fence, not to make points, but to disable and disarm. A man, when he succeeds in throwing off a woman who has attempted to marry him, always carries away a maudlin sympathy for her in her defeat and dismay. But no one ever heard of a woman who pitied the poor fellow whose honest passion she had found it expedient to spurn. On the contrary, women take delight in such clownish agonies, and

exhibit them proudly, and brag about them to other women.

§34.

The Transvaluation of Values.—The gradual emancipation of women that has been going on for the last century has still a long way to proceed before they are wholly delivered from their traditional burdens and so stand clear of the oppressions of men. But already, it must be plain, they have made enormous progress—perhaps more than they made in the ten thousand years preceding. The rise of the industrial system, which has borne so harshly upon the race in general, has brought them certain unmistakable benefits. Their economic dependence, though still sufficient to make marriage highly attractive to them, is nevertheless so far broken down that large classes of women are now almost free agents, and quite independent of the favor of men. Most of

these women, responding to ideas that are still powerful, are yet intrigued, of course, by marriage, and prefer it to the autonomy that is coming in, but the fact remains that they now have a free choice in the matter, and that dire necessity no longer controls them. After all, they needn't marry if they don't want to; it is possible to get their bread by their own labor in the workshops of the world. Their grandmothers were in a far more difficult position. Failing marriage, they not only suffered a cruel ignominy, but in many cases faced the menace of actual starvation. There was simply no respectable place in the economy of those times for the free woman. She either had to enter a nunnery or accept a disdainful patronage that was as galling as charity.

Nothing could be plainer than the effect that the increasing economic security of women is having upon their whole habit of life and mind. The diminishing mar-

riage rate and the even more rapidly diminishing birth rate show which way the wind is blowing. It is common for male statisticians, with characteristic imbecility, to ascribe the fall in the marriage rate to a growing disinclination on the male side. This growing disinclination is actually on the female side. Even though no considerable body of women has yet reached the definite doctrine that marriage is less desirable than freedom, it must be plain that large numbers of them now approach the business with far greater fastidiousness than their grandmothers or even their mothers exhibited. They are harder to please, and hence pleased less often. The woman of a century ago could imagine nothing more favorable to her than marriage; even marriage with a fifth-rate man was better than no marriage at all. This notion is gradually feeling the opposition of a contrary notion. Women in general may still

prefer marriage to work, but there is an increasing minority which begins to realize that work may offer the greater contentment, particularly if it be mellowed by a certain amount of philandering.

There already appears in the world, indeed, a class of women, who, while still not genuinely averse to marriage, are yet free from any theory that it is necessary, or even invariably desirable. Among these women are a good many somewhat vociferous propagandists, almost male in their violent earnestness; they range from the man-eating suffragettes to such preachers of free motherhood as Ellen Key and such professional boob-shockers and martyrs as Margaret Sanger. But among them are many more who wake the world with no such noisy eloquence, but content themselves with carrying out their ideas in a quiet and respectable manner. The number of such women is much larger than is

generally imagined, and that number tends to increase steadily. They are women who, with their economic independence assured, either by inheritance or by their own efforts, chiefly in the arts and professions, do exactly as they please, and make no pother about it. Naturally enough, their superiority to convention and the common frenzy makes them extremely attractive to the better sort of men, and so it is not uncommon for one of them to find herself voluntarily sought in marriage, without any preliminary scheming by herself—surely an experience that very few ordinary women ever enjoy, save perhaps in dreams or delirium.

The old order changeth and giveth place to the new. The sun do move. Among the women's clubs and in the finishing schools, I have no doubt, there is still much debate of the old and silly question: Are platonic relations possible be-

tween the sexes? In other words, is friendship possible without sex? Many a woman of the new order dismisses the problem with another question: Why without sex? With the decay of the ancient concept of women as property there must come inevitably a reconsideration of the whole sex question, and out of that reconsideration there must come a revision of the medieval penalties which now punish the slightest frivolity in the female. The notion that honor in women is exclusively a physical matter, that a single aberrance may convert a woman of the highest merits into a woman of none at all, that the sole valuable thing a woman can bring to marriage is virginity—this notion is so preposterous that no intelligent person, male or female actually cherishes it. It survives as one of the hollow conventions of Christianity; nay, of the savagery that preceded Christianity. As women throw off

the other conventions which now bind them they will throw off this one, too, and so their virtue, grounded upon fastidiousness and self-respect instead of upon mere fear and conformity, will become a far more laudable thing than it ever can be under the present system. And for its absence, if they see fit to dispose of it, they will no more apologize than a man apologizes today.

Even prostitution, in the long run, may become a more or less respectable profession, as it was in the great days of the Greeks. That quality will surely attach to it if ever it grows quite unnecessary; whatever is unnecessary is always respectable, for example, religion, fashionable clothing, and a knowledge of Latin grammar. The prostitute is disesteemed today, not because her trade involves anything intrinsically degrading or even disagreeable, but because she is currently assumed to have been driven into it by dire

necessity, against her dignity and inclination. That this assumption is usually unsound is no objection to it; nearly all the thinking of the world, particularly in the field of morals, is based upon unsound assumption, *e. g.*, that God observes the fall of a sparrow and is shocked by the fall of a Sunday-school superintendent. The truth is that prostitution is one of the most attractive of the occupations practically open to the stupid and unresourceful sort of women who engage in it, and that the prostitute commonly likes her work, and would not exchange places with a shop-girl or a waitress for anything in the world. The notion to the contrary is propagated by unsuccessful prostitutes who fall into the hands of professional uplifters, and who assent to the imbecile theories of the latter in order to cultivate their good-will, just as convicts in the penitentiary, questioned by prohibitionists, always ascribe their rascality to alcohol.

The truth is that no prostitute, at least in America, is under the slightest duress; she is perfectly free to abandon her trade and go into a store or factory or into domestic service whenever the impulse strikes her; all the prevailing gabble about white slave jails and kidnappers comes from pious rogues who make a living by feeding such bosh to the credulous. So long as the average prostitute is able to make a good living, she is quite content with her lot, and disposed to contrast it egoistically with the slavery of her virtuous sisters. If she complains of it, then you may be sure that her success is below her expectations. A starving lawyer always sees injustice in the courts. A bad physician is a bitter critic of Ehrlich and Pasteur. And when a suburban clergyman is kicked out of his pulpit by a vestry-room revolution he almost invariably concludes that the sinfulness of man is incurable, and sometimes he even begins to

doubt some of the typographical errors in Holy Writ.

§35.

The Future of Marriage.—The transvaluation of values that is now in progress will go on slowly and for a very long while. That it will ever be quite complete is rather to be doubted. There are, in fact, inherent differences between man and woman, and those differences will continue to show themselves until the end of time. As woman gradually becomes convinced, not only of the possibility of economic independence, but also of its value, she will lose her present overmastering desire for marriage, and address herself to meeting men in free economic competition. That is to say, she will address herself to acquiring that practical competence, that high talent for puerile and chiefly mechanical expertness, which now sets man ahead of her in the labor

market of the world. To do this she will have to sacrifice some of her present intelligence; it is impossible to imagine a genuinely intelligent human being becoming a competent trial lawyer, or buttonhole worker, or newspaper copy reader, or piano tuner, or coal broker, or house painter. Women, to get upon all fours with men in such stupid occupations, will have to commit spiritual suicide, which is probably much further than they will ever actually go. Thus a shade of their present superiority to men will always remain, and with it a shade of their relative inefficiency, and so marriage will remain attractive to them, or at all events to most of them, and its overthrow will be prevented. As I have already remarked, nature is on its side. To abolish it entirely, as certain fevered reformers propose, would be as difficult as to abolish the precession of the equinoxes.

At the present time women wobble

somewhat absurdly between two schemes of life, the old and the new. On the one hand, their economic independence is still full of conditions, and on the other hand they are in revolt against the immemorial conventions. The result is a general unrest, with many symptoms of extravagant and unintelligent revolt. One of those symptoms is the appearance of intellectual striving in women—not a striving, alas, toward the genuine pearls and rubies of the mind, but one merely toward the acquirement of the rubber stamps that men employ in their so-called thinking. Thus we have women who launch themselves into party politics, and fill their heads with a vast mass of useless knowledge about political tricks, customs, theories and personalities. Thus, too, we have the woman uplifter, trailing along ridiculously behind a tatterdemalion posse of chautauquans, utopians and other such quacks, each with something to sell.

And thus we have the woman who goes in for advanced wisdom of the sort on draught in women's clubs—in brief, the sort of wisdom which consists entirely of a body of beliefs and propositions that are ignorant, unimportant and untrue. Such banal striving, of course, is not peculiar to the United States, but it is surely more widespread here than elsewhere. Its popularity is due to the relatively greater leisure of our people, who work less than any other people in the world, and, above all, to the relatively greater leisure of our women. Thousands of them have been emancipated from any compulsion to productive labor without having acquired any compensatory intellectual or artistic interest or social duty. The result is that they swarm in the women's clubs, and waste their time listening to bad poetry, worse music, and still worse lectures on Maeterlinck, Balkan politics and the subconscious. It is among such women that

one observes the periodic rages for Bergsonism, paper-bag cookery, the Montessori method, the twilight sleep and other such follies, so pathetically characteristic of our culture.

One of the evil effects of this tendency I have hitherto descanted upon, to wit, the growing feminine disposition to regard all routine labor, particularly in the home, as *infra dignitatem* and hence intolerable. Out of that notion arise many lamentable phenomena. On the one hand, we have the spectacle of a great number of healthy and well-fed women engaged in public activities that, nine times out of ten, are meaningless, mischievous and a nuisance, and on the other hand we behold such a decay in the domestic arts that, at the first onslaught of war, the national government has to import a foreign expert to teach the housewives of the country the veriest elements of thrift. No such instruction was needed by the house-

wives of the Continent. They were simply told how much food they could have, and their natural competence did the rest. There is never any avoidable waste over there, either in peace or in war. A French housewife has little use for a garbage can, save as a depository for New Thought literature. She does her best with the means at her disposal, not only in war time but at all times, and her best is very good indeed.

As I have said over and over again in this inquiry, a woman's disinclination to acquire the intricate expertness that lies at the bottom of good housekeeping is due primarily to her active intelligence; it is difficult for her to concentrate her mind upon such stupid and meticulous enterprises. But whether difficult or easy, it is obviously important for the average woman to make some effort in that direction, for if she fails to do so there is chaos. That chaos is duly visible.

Here women reveal one of their subterranean qualities: their deficiency in conscientiousness. They are quite without that dog-like fidelity to duty which is one of the shining marks of men. They never summon up a high pride in doing what is inherently disagreeable; they always go to the galleys under protest, and with vows of sabotage; their fundamental philosophy is almost that of the I. W. W. The sentimentality of men connives at this, and is thus largely responsible for it. Before the average *puella*, apprenticed in the kitchen, can pick up a fourth of the culinary subtleties that are commonplaces even to the negro chefs on Pullman dining-cars, she has caught a man and need concern herself about them no more, for he has to eat, in the last analysis, whatever she sets before him, and his lack of intelligence makes it easy for her to shut off his academic criticisms by bald appeals to his emotions. By an easy process he

finally attaches a positive value to her indolence. It is a proof, he concludes, of her fineness of soul. In the presence of her lofty incompetence he is abashed.

But as women, gaining economic autonomy, meet men in progressively bitterer competition, the rising masculine distrust and fear of them will be reflected even in the enchanted domain of marriage, and the husband, having yielded up most of his old rights, will begin to reveal a new jealousy of those that remain, and particularly of the right to a fair *quid pro quo* for his own docile industry. In brief, as women shake off their ancient disabilities they will also shake off some of their ancient immunities, and their doings will come to be regarded with a soberer and more exigent scrutiny than now prevails. The extension of the suffrage, I believe, will encourage this awakening; in wresting it from the reluctant male the women of the land are sowing

dragons' teeth, the which will presently leap up and gnaw them. Once women have the political power to obtain their just rights, they will begin to lose their old power to obtain special privileges by sentimental appeals. Men, facing them squarely, will consider them anew, not as romantic political and social invalids, to be coddled and caressed, but as free competitors in a harsh world. When that reconsideration gets under way there will be a general overhauling of the relations between the sexes, and some of the fair ones, I suspect, will begin to wonder why they didn't let well enough alone.

§36.

The War and Marriage.—No doubt this process will be helped by the present series of wars. If it continues, as seems likely, for ten or fifteen years, there will be such a butchery of men that even the losses of the Taiping Rebellion will be ex-

ceeded, and so the rising generation of women will face a shortage of husbands. The result cannot fail to be an augmentation of masculine watchfulness, and, *per corollary*, a stiffening of the normal masculine demand. Every man of agreeable exterior and easy means will be pursued, not merely by a few dozen or score of women, as now, but by whole battalions and brigades of them, and he will be driven in sheer self-defense into very sharp bargaining. Perhaps in the end the state will have to interfere in the business, to prevent the potential husband going to waste in the turmoil of opportunity.

Just what form this interference is likely to take has not yet appeared clearly. In France there is already a wholesale legitimization of children born out of wedlock and in Hungary there has been a clamor for the legalization of polygamy, but these devices do not meet the main problem, which is the encourage-

ment of monogamy to the utmost. A plan that suggests itself is the amelioration of the position of the monogamous husband, now rendered so uncomfortable by our laws. I do not think that the more intelligent sort of women, faced by a perilous shortage of men, would object seriously to that amelioration. They must see plainly that the present system, if it is carried much further, will begin to work powerfully against their best interests, if only by greatly reinforcing the disinclination to marriage that already exists among the better sort of men. The woman of true discretion, I am convinced, would much rather marry a superior man, even on unfavorable terms, than make John Smith her husband, serf and prisoner at one stroke.

The law must eventually recognize this fact and make provision for it. The average husband, perhaps, deserves little succor. The woman who pursues and mar-

ries him, though she may be moved by selfish aims, should be properly rewarded by the state for her service to it—a service surely not to be lightly estimated by a military power. And that reward may conveniently take the form of the present statutes giving her title to a third or a half of his real property, and requiring him to surrender most of his income to her, and releasing her from all obedience to him and from all obligation to keep his house in order. But the woman who aspires to higher game should be quite willing, it seems to me, to resign some of these advantages in compensation for the greater honor and satisfaction of being wife to a man of merit, and mother to his children. All that is needed is a law allowing her, if she will, to resign her right of dower, her right to maintenance and her immunity from discipline, and to make any other terms that she may be led to regard as equitable. At present

women are unable to make most of these concessions even if they would: the law is inflexible. If, for example, a woman should agree, by an ante-nuptial contract, to submit herself to the discipline, not of the current statutes, but of the elder common law, which allowed a husband to correct his wife corporally with a stick no thicker than his thumb, it would be competent for any sentimental neighbor to set the agreement at naught by haling her husband into court for carrying it out, and it is a safe wager that the juridic shyster on the bench would jail him.

This plan, however novel it may seem, is actually already in operation. Many a married woman, in order to keep her husband from revolt, makes more or less disguised surrenders of certain of the rights and immunities that she has under our present laws. There are, for example, even in America, women who practise the domestic arts with competence and dil-

igence, despite the plain fact that no legal penalty would be visited upon them if they failed to do so. There are women who follow external trades and professions, contributing a share to the family exchequer. There are women who obey their husbands, even against their best judgment. There are, most numerous of all, women who wink discreetly at husbandly departures, overt or in mere intent, from the oath of chemical purity taken at the altar of God. It is a commonplace, indeed, that many happy marriages admit a party of the third part. There would be more of them if there were more women with enough serenity of mind to see the practical advantage of the arrangement. The trouble with such triangulations is not primarily that they involve perjury or that they offer any fundamental offense to the wife; if she avoids banal theatricals, in fact, they commonly have the effect of augmenting

the husband's devotion to her and respect for her, if only as the fruit of comparison. The trouble with them is that very few men have sense enough to manage them intelligently. The masculine mind is readily taken in by specious values; the average married man, if he succumbs at all, succumbs to some meretricious and flambuoyant creature, bent only upon fleecing him. Here is where the hard common sense of the Frenchman shows its superiority to the sentimentality of the American. A Frenchman would no more think of taking a mistress without consulting his wife than he would think of running for office without consulting his wife. The result is that he is seldom victimized. For one Frenchman ruined by women there are at least a hundred Americans, despite the fact that a hundred times as many Frenchmen engage in that sort of recreation. The case of Zola is typical. As well known, his

amours were carefully supervised by Mme. Zola from the first days of their marriage, and in consequence his life was wholly free from scandals and his mind was never distracted from his work.

§37.

Apologia.—In conclusion, I crave the indulgence of the cultured reader for the imperfections necessarily visible in all that I have here set down—imperfections not only due to incomplete information and fallible logic, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to certain fundamental weaknesses of the sex to which I have the honor to belong. A man is inseparable from his congenital vanities and stupidities, as a dog is inseparable from its fleas. They reveal themselves in everything he says and does, but they reveal themselves most of all when he discusses the majestic mystery of woman. Just as he smirks and rolls his eyes in her actual presence, so

puts on a pathetic and unescapable clownishness when he essays to dissect her in the privacy of the laboratory. There is no book on women by a man, at least in the English language, that is not a stupendous compendium of posturings and imbecilities. There are but two books that show even a superficial desire to be honest—"The Unexpurgated Case Against Woman Suffrage," by Sir Almroth Wright, and this one. Wright made a gallant attempt to tell the truth, but before he had got half way through his task his ineradicable donkeyishness as a male overcame his scientific frenzy as a psychologist, and so he hastily washed his hands of the business, and affronted the judicious with a half-baked and preposterous book. Perhaps I have failed too, and even more ingloriously. If so, I am full of sincere and indescribable regret.

